VARIED VOICES

From the Muse

Of Beech Bend

W. H. FRASHEAR

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VARIED VOICES

FROM

THE MUSE

OF

BEECH BEND

BY

WILLIAM HELM BRASHEAR

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WORK THOU AND PRAY.

What if to-day should sorrow come,
  And with fell gloom
Turn into sudden night my day?
  "Work thou and pray!"

But if the morrow's dawning bring
  Still sorrowing,
Nor lifts the shadow from my way?
  "Work thou and pray!"

But if the third day come and pass,
  And still, alas!
My prayer finds not to God its way?
  "Work thou and pray!"

What if the more I pray, my woe
  Doth deeper flow,
And darker yet, from day to day?
  "Work thou and pray!"

Ah, what if with unanswered prayer,
  At length despair
Doth smother hope's last feeble ray?
  "Work thou and pray!"

WHEN MY SWEETHEART PASSES BY.

When my sweetheart passes by,
Flowers look with jealous eye.
Saith the rose, "She hath my cheek!"
Violets, in accent meek,
Whisper, "Look, mine eye hath she!"
And the lily murmurs, "See!
Mine her fair hand's loveliness!"
And the happy winds that kiss
Her, saith, "Hush, ye vainest elves!
Pray, don't flatter so yourselves;
Oh! I've kissed her, and I dare
None save her with her compare!"
So speak flowers, so reply
Winds that kiss her cheek, her hair.
When my sweetheart passes by!

When my sweetheart passes by,
Fairer grows the earth and sky,
Life seems a diviner thing,
Eyes lift up in thanksgiving,
Men grow nobler but to see
Such a vision heavenly,
Such sweet charm of form and face,
Such a step of sylph-like grace,
Such sweet maiden innocence
In her laughter, in her glance!
Ah! all men are gentlemen,
Even the most clownish then
Are turned knights who fain would die

To avenge her least offense,
When my sweetheart passes by!

When my sweetheart passes by,
Leaps my soul into mine eye
Raptly of her charms to drink!—
E'en as souls upon the brink
Of elysian fountains kneel,
Thence to quaff until they reel
With such drunkenness as thrill
The Gods, and make more godly still!—
Such the magic of her charms!
So her sudden presence storms
All my being with a bliss
That hath heaven's perfectness!
I would live or I would die;
All alike seems made to bless,
When my sweetheart passes by!

SUMMER'S CROWN.

In that calm mood and rapt content of those
Who blessed feel in having others blest,
Fair Summer, who had reached her labor's close
In forest, field and vale, reclined in rest.

And resting so, sleep stole upon her eyes
As softly as the thistle-down descends,

Or fall the shadows out of evening skies,
  Or soul of waking blossom upward tends.

Her works on every hand about her lay
  And mutely praised her in their perfectness;
And in her sleep she seemed to hear one say:
  "Well done, well done!"—such dreams her slumber
    bless!

And while she slept, her duty nobly done,
  To show His sweet approval of her, God
Did pluck a wreath that grew about the sun,
  And bending, crowned her with the golden-rod!

THIS WORLD OF OURS.

This mortal world of ours
Hath thorns commixed with flowers,
Hath birds within its bowers
  And serpents in the grass;
Hath nights with bats that follow
Sweet day and its fleet swallow,
And through the blue sky's hollow
  Like fiend and angel pass.

Here summer's sunshine gloweth,
Here blade and leaflet groweth,
Here winds of fragrance bloweth
  Till earth is all abloom;
Here winter withers flower,
Strips leaf from tree and bower,

Takes sunshine from the hour
And turns earth to a tomb.

Here wisdom and mad folly,
Here joy and melancholy,
Here evil things and holy
Within one bosom dwell;
And life from death here springeth,
And death to life here clingeth,
Here hope to heaven wingeth
And doubt descends to hell.

Here lights and shadows hover,
Love saves and slays the lover,
Here cloud and star pass over,
Here honey blends with rue;
Here vernal zephyrs woo us,
Here wintry winds undo us,
Here sorrow doth pursue us
As joy we pursue.

Here hovel is and palace,
Here's charity and malice,
And here as in one chalice
Sweet laughter blends with tears;
The babe at birth here weepeth,
Here happy childhood leapeth,
Here age decripit creepeth
Beneath its weight of years.

Here death is and here birth is,
Here mourning and here mirth is,

Here heaven and here earth is,
  Here all we hate or love;
Here beam and cloud enwreath us,
Here good and ill bequeath us,
Here graves strew earth beneath us
  And stars strew skies above!

TWO MOURNERS.

While sat I on a church-yard stone,
One summer eve, and mused alone,
  One sorrow laden entered there,
And stood above a grave new made,
  And wiped away the stealing tear;
Then knelt, and clasped his hands, and prayed.
Anon he rose; with lifted eyes
He smiled through tears upon the skies.

The load of grief that seemed to bow
Erst-while his form, was lifted now!
  He turned to go and passing me,
I said: "My friend, who is it lies
  In yonder grave, so dear to thee?"
He paused and turned upon me eyes
Whose blended hope and sorrow moved
My tears, and said: "'Twas one I loved!"

So passed he on. Anon, there came
Another seeking out the same
  Late covered grave. He knelt thereon

And prest his forehead to its clay,
  And writhed and moaned with bitter moan:
And prayed as e'en despair might pray,
Which, having prayed, yet finds no less
Its burden of soul-bitterness!

At length he rose; with bended head,
He took his way uncomforted.
  "My friend," I said, as passed he near,
"Yon late made grave—who sleeps therein
  That is indeed to thee so dear?"
He turned upon me eyes wherein
Despair and shame and sorrow thronged,
And answered me: "Twas one I wronged!"

UNMASKED.

One morn—'twas perfect June's most perfect day,
  When all that's sweetest in fair summer time
  Stands tiptoe on the pinnacle of prime;
When beauty, song and love hold maddest sway
By wood and field and stream—I passed this way,
  Then on this withered stalk, as perfect rhyme
  Paired with its fellow, did bright blossoms climb
One o'er the other, in most sweet array.

Behold, how out of blossoms death hath brought
  Black burrs, toad-ugly, squatting side by side!
Who deemed so fair contained so foul a birth!—
  Now I bethink, and shudder at the thought,

How serpent souls in fairest forms may hide
Till death unmask and show their real worth!

WHEN THE SOFT WEST WINDS IS BLOWIN'.

When the soft west winds is blowin' through the silken
leaves uv May,
And each songster is er 'lowin' that he sings the sweet-
est lay;
When the sunlit skies er-bove all are as soft as love-lit
eyes;
When there haint no note of sorrow, but er song to
song replies;
When the lights an' shades er dancin' on the grass be-
neath the trees
To the music an' the promptin' uv the birds an' uv the
breeze;
Oh, my blood is sot er-flowin'; I fergit my hair is gray,
When the soft west winds is blowin' through the silken
leaves uv May!

Here er-lollin' in my hammock, in the gentle winds
that blow,
I have drapt into a-dreamin' uv er May uv long er-go!
I behold a barefoot boy who a truancy has planned;
There's er pole across his shoulder, there's er "bait
can" in his hand!
With the swiftness of the swallow, with its buoyancy
an' ease,
I behold him cross the medder—now I lose him 'mong

the trees!
Oh, my blood is sot er-flowin', an' my head's no longer gray,
When the soft west winds is blowin' through the silken leaves uv May!

Now I see him at the river, with the mud between his toes,
In the shaddow of the willows where his baited line he throws.
Bye an' bye there is er swishin' an' er splutter an' er gleam,
An' er sunfish, game and golden, he has landed from the stream!
An' the woodlark's notes is ringin' deep in shadders cool an' sweet,
And er trumpet vine er-bove him drops its blossom at his feet.
Oh, my heart is sot er-going, an' my head's no longer gray,
When the soft west winds is blowin' through the silken leaves uv May!

Tell me, saints of earth an' heaven, are yer gladder than that boy?
Are yer hearts so like er blossom? does your bliss as little cloy?
Would yer not forsake yer saintship then and thar that boy to be?—
He of days of Mays departed who with mem'ry's eyes I see?—

Yea, that boy thar er-settin', as his baited line he throws
In the shadder uv the willows with the mud between his toes!
Oh, my heart is sot er-goin'; I fergit my head is gray,
When the soft west winds is blowin' through the silken leaves uv May!

A THING OF BEAUTY.

Once, on a morn in early August days,
I saw a stalk of corn, rank, green and tall,
In virgin silk and tassel consummate.
Its long and slender blades, with drooping points,
Were hung of crystal dew; about its trunk
A morning glory daintily had twined,
And from its base up to its tasseled tip
There climed a spiral stair of blossoms blue.

As there it stood before the breaking dawn,
Agleam with dripping dews from crown to base,
In every fiber did it seem athrill
Of conscious life delicious as was fair
Its outward form!—ecstatic as they know,
The bless'd above, who know that all is love!—
A thing so blest and beautiful it seemed!

I stood and gazed upon it rapt and long,
Till stole upon mine eyes a mist of tears,
Born of that sorrow perfect beauty wakes—

A happiness known only of the soul,
And sweeter far than mortal words may say!

LIFE.

I stand beside a fire in the night,
That blindeth me from all save 'round it lies;
Yea, when it burns the brighter then mine eyes
See least beyond the limits of its light.
Anon it wanes—anon with feeble might,
'Mid ashes gray it faints—it fails and dies!
I turn my gaze above, and, lo! the skies
That, while the fire flamed, seemed to my sight
A dome of murk as grim as Erebus,
Are now with countless stars made glorious!
Life is a fire in the night! Awhile
It hides from us with near and mortal shine,
The sweet, immortal glow of truth's divine,
Star-like that wait upon the soul to smile!

MOTHER.

Ah, love her as thou wilt, while here with thee,
When thou stand'st weeping o'er
Her grave, thy one and only wish shall be,
That thou had'st loved her more!

Yea, when she lies with lips no longer stirred
With smiles to see thee nearing;

Nor answers, as her wont, thy kindest word,
With language more endearing!

When she sleeps on, as ne'er before she slept,
While pain kept thee from sleeping;
When she weeps not, as e'er before she wept,
When thou stood'st by her weeping!

Ah, when she lieth mute and cold as stone,
Caught in death's frozen slumber—
Then of thy many sins, one sin alone
Will seem thy soul to cumber!

Then thou shalt cry in anguish of despair;
"O, God, forgive mine error!
While here she walked with me, I held her dear;
Oh, had I held her dearer!

"Had I so done, mine were not this despair,
As I bend weeping o'er her;
Oh, I could pray, and God should hear my prayer,
Had I but loved her more!"

O, ye, who yet a mother claim on earth,
Wait not till death discover,
Alas, too late for thee, thy blessing's worth,
But love her now; Oh, love her!

AUGUST DAYS.

O perfect days of sweetest restfulness!
O days of lazy, hazy lights, and skies

As loveful soft as are a mother's eyes
Who on her bosom feels her babe's caress!
O days that windless, sunny noons possess,
When leafy earth in dreamful slumber lies
And no bird sings, for silence satisfies,
And one content seems earth and sky to bless!
O days of sleeping waters, willow swept,
With lilies lined, with soft sky mirrorings!
O days when forest silences are kept,
Save where, leaf-hidden, some cicada sings
With purring, drowsful notes that rise and fall,
And make the silence but more palpable!

THAT IS MARCH.

When leafless twigs aloft,
Through which the loud winds sigh,
With swelling buds grow soft
Against a changeful sky—
That is March!

When fields, erstwhile so gray,
First show a verdant sheen,
A sheen so shadowy
'Tis seen and then not seen—
That is March!

When first of notes are heard,
Come up from pond or bog,
A whistle like a bird,
But is the early frog—
That is March!

When winds now softly blow
  Warm from the land of spice,
Then wheel to North, and, lo!
  The frog looks up through ice—
    That is March!

When waking Nature stirs
  And murmurs half asleep,
Summing life's hopes and fears
  That bid her smile and weep—
    That is March!

When winds do blow and rave,
  Till withered leaves of earth
Rise as from out their grave,
  And weave a ghastly mirth—
    That is March!

When doubtfully birds sing,
  As if their sings were sin,
And Winter plays with Spring
  A game of lose-and-win—
    That is March!

When lights and shades contend
  For mastery below;
And Spring and Winter blend
  Their violets and snow—
    That is March!

When like the fickle maid
  Spring frowns on us, and then

With kind caress makes glad
And turns our loss to gain—
That is March!

WHAT IS LOVE?

Ah, what is love?
A tiger, dove,
A sting, a kiss,
A pain, a bliss,
A hope, a doubt,
A smile, a pout,
A thorn, a flower,
'Tis shine, 'tis shower,
A faith, a fear,
A curse, a prayer!

Ah, what is love?
'Tis earth, 'tis sky,
A truth, a lie,
'Tis peace, 'tis strife,
'Tis death, 'tis life,
'Tis moan, 'tis mirth,
'Tis heaven, earth,
A star, a clod,
A fiend, a God!—
Ah, what is love?

ABOVE THE DEAD.

I.

We stand above the grave,
  And say: "'Tis Sleep!
It shall but keep
  Our loved a little while,—
Let us not weep!

"Ay, death is but a night
  Which dawn shall break!
He will awake,
  Our loved, when night is past,
Our tears to slake."

But he, the sleeper there,
  Makes no replies,—
Lifts hands nor eyes
  To say if foolish be
Our words, or wise!

II.

We stand above the grave
  In such dispair
As knows no prayer,
  And cry: "Where are the dead?
Ah, what and where!

"Ah, death is endless night,
  Where no sound is

Except the hiss
  Of sighs, heard and not heard,
Through Night's abyss!"

But he, the sleeper there,
  Makes no replies,—
Lifts hands nor eyes
  To say if foolish be
Our words, or wise!

WINTER RAIN.

Gray mists steal o'er the sky, yet whence they come,
  None see, but only know the skies grow gray
  And grayer, till the sun, shorn of his ray,
Moon-like appears behind a veil of gloom.
The silence and the loneness of the tomb
  Pervadeth hill and plain and woodland way.
  Anon the rain, first fine as fountain spray,
From voiceless skies descends to earth as dumb.
All day the laden drops o'er hill and plain
  Seem falling straight into the sodden ground.
  The dim day thickens into night profound
Without one briefest gleam of sunset sky;
  And as upon your midnight couch you lie,
Still sounds the sob and sighing of the rain.

WHERE THE WOODLARK SINGS.

Deep in sylvan solitudes,
  Where the colonnaded trees

Interlace above, and broods
Densest shadows, and the breeze
Soundeth like the distant seas;
Where dank lichens ooze, and where
Dews of night at noon-day gleam;
Where, if fall some sunny beam,
Swift it flies on feet of fear,
And the owl with folded wings
Sits 'mid emerald glooms adream—
This is where the Woodlark sings!

Where the mosses, dark and deep,
Robe the bole of giant tree
Soft and somb'rously, and sleep
Silence till one bird that be,
Breaketh into melody;
Where wild flowers, fragile, pale,
Stand expectant, as some sprite,
Tremulous of subtle fright;
Where o'er trunks of trees the snail
Silent writes of mystic things,
Trailing lines of silver light—
This is where the Woodlark sings!

Where is heard some tink'ling brook,
Hidden deep in forest dell,
Rippling over mossy rock,
Dark'ling where dense shadows dwell;
Where is felt some mystic spell
Tenderly the soul to thrill,
Wrought of sylvan deities
Through the forest silences;

Where the dryads have their will,
And the bat at noon-day wings,
Hushed, through shadowed distances—
This is where the Woodlark sings!

You should hear this hermit bird,
Deep in sylvan shadows cool;
Sweet and sad as waters heard
Trick'ling in some cavern pool
Where eternal shadows rule!
Soft in silver tones it wells,
Rippling through the woodland air;
Sweet and sad as hope and fear!
Sweet and sad as mem'ry's bells
Heard when dewy twilight flings
Pensive peace afar and near—
This is how the Woodlark sings!

OCTOBER.

Now is when the woods are brilliant
With their autumn robes of glory;
Yet while 'neath their boughs we wander
There will steal a subtle sadness
Like a shadow o'er our spirit.

Need we wonder why can this be?
Why amid such light and beauty
There should steal this sense of sadness?
Nay, this brilliancy around us
Is the beauty death hath given,

Is the cold and silent brightness
That the wand of death hath given
As if so to mock the living!

Now throughout the forest golden
Reigns a solemn silence, save where
Boughs anon are softly shaken
By the wind that cometh, goeth,
As some spirit heard but seen not,
On a mission sent of sorrow
Sighing o'er a sadful duty—
Loosening the leaves that twinkle
Brightly as to earth descending,
Yet unto the heart as sadful
As the tears of sorrow falling!
Yea, for not alone descend they
Brightly to the earth around us,
Or upon our head, our shoulder,
As we wander in the forest,
But upon the heart are falling!

Brightly shines the sun, but coldly
As the fires of the forest
That do beckon but to mock us;
He awakes no bud that slumbers,
No bird melody awakens,
Calls no flower back to being!
But he walks o'er hill and valley
Leaving as the frost hath left them,
Browned and seared, bitter blighted;
Seeming with his smile to sanction
What the frost hath wrought in darkness;

Or he smiles as one who smileth
Whom disaster hath o'ertaken
Till his sorrow mocketh joy!

Now the skies—where through the summer
Circled glad and buoyant swallows,
With their ceaseless merry twitter—
Bend in emptiness and silence,
Save when flocks of birds sweep through them,
Silent but for whir of pinion,
On their hurried way to southland—
Ominous of winter's coming!
Pause they not for all the brightness
Of autumnal tints beneath them;
For they know these golden forests
That so glitter in the sunlight,
Are no other than the banner
Of old Winter borne before him
To proclaim his coming after!—
Bright and gaudiest of banners,
For all hues of summer's flowers,
Have been gathered to its colors;
Gathered by the frosts of Autumn,
By the vanguard of Old Winter,
Bearing on his banner forward,
Bright and mockfulest of banners!

Low within the banks the river,
Issuing from out the forests,
Bears upon its placid waters
Far out into field and valley
Fleets of golden leaves that, passing,

Pass not, but grow thicker ever.
Solemnly the river glideth
With a movement slow, majestic,
As it sought the fittest measure
For the cortege it is bearing!—
Ceaseless cortege, ending never;
Like to that on Stygian waters
Which old Charion watches over!—
Out of life and into death-land;
Out of light and into shadow;
Out of shadow into darkness,
Utter night and silence utter!

Meadow lands erstwhile for rolling
Like a sea of blossom, rippling
In the gentle winds, and murmurous
With the hum of bees about them,
Now are lying gray and silent,
Where the cool and scentless zephyrs,
Wand'ring with a sighful whisper,
Lightly gather gossamer grasses
Aimlessly aloft to toss them,
Dropping them on sleeping waters
Where, as vaguely seen as phantoms,
Walk they with a spirit lightness,
Breaking not the mirrored surface!

IF LOVED THOU AS I

Thy love, were it mine,
As my heart is thine,
Ah, life were divine!

No cloudlet should swim
Past horizon rim
Life azure to dim!

The sun of delight,
In full zenith height,
Should banish all night!

The shadow that now
My being doth throw,
As I stand in the glow

Of bliss incomplete,
Should shrink 'neath my feet;
And shadowless, sweet

Light on every side,
The soul's vision wide,
Should flow and abide!—

Light, light not alone
Lighting life, but on
And up to God's throne!

Oh, loved thou as I,
This life 'neath the sky
And that one on high

Should touch and should be
So blended, that we
Death's change should not see!—
If loved thou as I!

RELIGION AND CREED.

Religion changes not; 'tis ever one;
  But creeds are many and are changing ever,—
  E'en as yon clouds that now unite, now sever,
And shift as shift the winds they ride upon!
Religion, far above them, is the sun,
  Which, with his steady beams that alter never,
  Enguilds the clouds that drift with mad endeavor
Until their brief, conflicting lives are run.
Yet, creeds are needful in man's cruder days;
  For as the sun's else pure, transparent light,
  Once caught in clouds is brightly seen of all,
So 'tis that creeds must catch Religion's rays,
  Ere unto souls endowed of feeble sight,
Its stainless beam divine grows visible!

TO A BIRD.

In being's scale, upon the steps that lead
Onward and up to God, art thou above
Me or below? May it not be, O, bird,
That thou art nearer Him than I? that man,
With his self-boasted wisdom, mind and soul,
Yet with a dimmer vision sees than thine?
May'st thou be not an elder born than man;
And in thy march through countless ages gone
Have grown more perfect and more like the gods

Than man has grown in his far briefer years?
O bird, that on yon blossom spray hast perched
To pour thy soul in song this vernal morn!
Would I might understand thee; would I might
Look through thine eyes, thy soul, upon the world
And read it in the light thou readest it!
How beautiful the world must look to thee!
How brightly mount thy hope and glorious!
And love thou findest in reality
The thing we dream him, and because we find
Our dream not realized, go mad or die,
Or waste through feeble years and call it age!

Thy faith is deeper than the faith of man;
No yesterday, no morrow mars thy day;
Despair, nor doubt, the shadow of despair,
Thou knowest, such as vex the faith of man;
Ah, surely thou art nearer God than I!
Assuredly more near the fountain-head
Of being, God permitteth thee to drink,—
Else like some spirit glad thou could'st not flit
From blossom bough to bough all day, thy soul
A bubbling fount of songful ecstasy!

A CHILD OF TIME.

'Tis said the sun is losing light;
That each eon in its flight
Doth some film of shadow fling
'Bout his orb, curse-like to cling,
'Minishing his brilliancy—

Even as with man when he
Hath o'erpast his prime, each year
Lessens hope, increaseth fear,
'Bout him weaving webb of gloom
Thick'ning as he nears the tomb.

'Tis said the sun is losing light!
Broods afar primeval night,
Where day's steeds with fire shod,
And his arrows of a god,
Drove her in his glory's dawn
Tramping on her throne in scorn;
But she marks his waning power
And she gloats upon the hour,
Tarry as it may, must come,
With her vengeance and his doom!

Ah, the sun is losing light!
He is mighty, but his might
Waneth from its pristine prime;
He, too, is a child of Time;
And his golden locks and goary,
Shall lose luster, till as hoary
They shall grow, and coldly gleam
As sad luna's pallid beam,
Faintly striving gainst a gloom,
Like a taper in a tomb!

Ay, the sun is losing light!
He has passed his highest height;
Draws with weaker hand the bow;
Shorter fall his arrows now,

Shorter fall from day to day!—
As a snake steals on its prey,
Primal night draws nearer still,
Closing 'round day's citadel
Which she yet will over-sweep
With her voiceless floods and deep,
When she shall her throne resume
With her feet upon his tomb!

QUEEN O' T'OTHER 'LEVEN.

October is the month for me; she's queen o' t'other 'leven.
An' while she holds, thar hain't no doubt, ole earth swings nighest heaven.
When the winesap and the pippin hang an' shine upon the trees,
A-swappin' meller fragrance fer the kisses 'o the breeze;
When the punkin's layin' yeller in betwixt the rows o' corn,
An' birds fly by in flocks, an' leaves like flocks o' birds are blown;
When the sas'fus thicket's glowin like er straw-rick sot er fire,
An' the red-bird hain't no redder than the leaf upon the brier,
An' the air's so 'toxercatin' 'at you want 'er whoop an' run,

An' you don't know which is pleasantest, the shadder
or the sun!

October has no roses, an' her birds hain't much in
tune,
But while she keeps you never hear me ax fer May or
June.
No, I never miss June's roses ner the violets o' May,
Ner the boasted songs of either, when the woodpeck
and the jay
In the yeller woods are quar'lin' an' er hoa'din' winter
fare,
An' er squ'rl's a-barkin' yonder an' er crow's a-cawin'
here,
An' the hicker'nuts a-fallin' an' a-hullin' at yer feet,
An' wild grapes an' haws an' 'simmons are jis' gettin'
good an' sweet,
An' the air is like elixor from some ole moss-covered
tun,
An' you don't know which is pleasantest, the shadder
or the sun!

October, yes, October is the month o' all fer me;
Hit wakes more sweeter memories o' days 'at ust to be,
When, with basket an' with satchel, on er bright Oc-
tober morn,
We scooted fer the forest over meadow, through the
corn;
Where from out the Spanish-needles sudden leaped an'
buzzed the quail,

An' er rabbit, chased by Rover, down er corn-row
tuck er sail,
While yonder in the forest, like er thousand silver
bells,
Er gang o' blackbirds answered to our happy whoops
an' yells!
An' the air so 'vigeratin' that no duty you would shun,
An' you don't know which is pleasantest, the shadder
or the sun!

October is my month, I say; some people think hit sad—
Say hit breathes er melancholy; but hit allus makes
me glad.
I see no melancholy in er ripely gethered sheaf,
An' I haint'er set a-broodin' by er fallen' golden leaf:
"Be ripe in goodness," teach they, "like the sheaf
when death shall call;
An', at yer fall be like the leaf—be fairest in yer fall."
Yes, I know the death o' summer in October we behold,
But what is sad in dyin' when hit means er crown o'
gold?
Ah, like summer, live in blessin', an' when life's last
san' is run,
You won't know which is pleasantest, the shadow or
the sun!

MATERNAL LOVE.

Of evil soul in childhood days,
He darker grew with coming years:

And ere he reached to manhood's prime,
  Confirmed his parent's darkest fears.

From slight offense he passed to crime,
  And then from crime to crime more deep,
Until it seemed no further sin
  His soul with darker stain might steep!

He broke his parents' hearts and bowed
  Their heads with age before their time;
He took their wealth, he took their home,
  To make his crime seem less than crime!

His father said: "I can no more!
  For him I'll take no further care,
For him I'll lift no more a hand;
  For him I'll shed no further tear!

"My love is dead! If dungeon cell
  Or hangman's rope his end shall prove,
He gets his dues; deserving these,
  He can deserve no father's love!"

His sister and his brother said:
"No brother he; we claim no kin
With one who so dishonors us,
  And wrings our hearts with sin on sin!

"We spurn him from us as a thing
  Unworthy human form or name;

He is not worthy of our love
Whom all our love could not reclaim!"

His mother said: "He is my child!
My love is his whate'er his deeds.
What mother asks her child's deserts?
She only asks what are his needs!

"He is my child; though unto hell
His many sins should him condemn,
A mother's heart should follow there
Still loving and forgiving him!

"He is my child! If he hath erred
Till he has gained God's wrath above
And all men's hate,—oh, then how much,
How much he needs a mother's love!

"He is my child, and being so,
No sin of his my love can slay!—
Not God who gave a mother's love,
Can take a mother's love away!"

ONCE IN MY WANDERINGS

Once, in my wanderings, I came upon
A country church abandoned long agone;
Through rotting roof past free the rain and sun,
Through time-rent walls the autumn leaves were blown.

The owlet, in its belfry, built her nest;
The bat upon its mouldy ceilings clung;
The prowling fox in his nocturnal quest,
Unfearing, through its vacant windows sprung.

It once upon a public road had stood
Which years and years ago had changed its way,
And left the old church there in solitude,
Crossed only by some traveler astray.

With growths of nature wild was overgrown
The ancient road that past the old church door,—
A door now as silent, ghostly, lone
As were the entrance to some sepulcher!

Hard by a little grassy plot was spread
Bestrewn with graves long left to nature's care;
The leaning stones that marked where slept the dead,
Knelt in the grass as if in humble prayer!

A soft September sun imbathed the scene
Which slept in pensive quietude profound,—
Their peace beneath the sod not more serene
Could be than that a-brood above the ground!

I stood beside a grave that sunken was,
Whose carven name did moss and lichen blur,
And in its long neglected, tangled grass,
I heard an hidden cricket chirr and chirr!

No bird made song; no softest zephyr stirred;
Nor any sound did there my hearing greet,

Save that one cricket in the grass that chirred
And seemed to make the silence more complete!

And often now while peopled streets I stroll,
That church, those grassy graves come back to me!
I breathe the pensive scene, and bathe my soul
In its unspeakable tranquility!

HYRAM.

A beggar he; along the road
On crutch he came laboriously;
For he was bearing such a load
As well might stagger you or me,—
A feeble frame, a palsied limb;
A load that death must lift from him!

While passing in the road, he met
Lorenzo, one of fortune great,
Who scarce had known desire yet
His fortune might not satiate;
Yet cold and close with all his store,
He gave but grudgingly the poor.

Here Hyram, leaning on his crutch,
Of 'Renzo asked as he rode by
An alms; "The world is full of such!"
Lorenzo muttered scowlingly,—
And then a penny forth he drew,
Which at the beggar's feet he threw.

When in the dust at Hyram's side
It fell, he seemed it not to view:
"There lies your alms," Lorenzo cried,
"Or must I pick it up for you?"
Then Hyram said with voice calm:
"Thus given, beggar as I am,

"I cannot take it! Be it known,
One may be human though he begs;
And hearts of feeling have been borne
In bosoms that were clothed in rags!—
Ah, one were kinder giving naught,
Than all bestowing in this sort!"

Here smiled Lorenzo mockingly;
Then as he drove a-down the road,
Once o'er his shoulder, furtively,
He turned his gaze where Hyram stood,
And mused: "Too proud a beggar quite!—
He'll take it when I'm once from sight."

Lorenzo by this road returned
That evening at the set of sun,
And there the penny he discerned
Which he at Hyram's feet had thrown:
As it had fallen, yet it lay;
But he who begged had gone his way.

Some while Lorenzo sat and stared
Upon the penny and the tracks
That led from it of feet half bared,
And bitterness his spirit racks;

Remorse! Remorse!—holds hell a cup
More bitter for the damned to sup?

'Tis more than sorrow, more than grief;
It shuts out hope and prayer and tears;
We ask nor seek, nor hope relief.—
We only writhe the while it sears,
Unknowing when shall end or how,
The flames of hell within that glow!

* * * * * * *

'Tis said, that night a beggar died,
Lorenzo's mansion home a-near;
That 'Renzo's face, when he espied
. The corpse, wore looks that one might wear
Brought face to face, in morning's light,
With one he'd slain at dead of night!

THE WIND AND THE WAVE.

I lay on the shore o'erlooking the sea,
That glassily rolled 'till it kist the blue sky
Whose image it mirrored so palpably—
The one snowy cloud, soft a-slumber, on high;
The vulture that dreamily circled thereby!

And whilst thus I sat overlooking the ocean,
A whirlwind arose o'er the water's expanse;
And felt, yet unseen, like some spirit a-dance,
It trampled calm waters to frothful commotion;

Then passed as it came, while the waves left behind,
A-rush and a-roar, seemed searching to find
The mystical cause that thus them awoke.
But hither and thither they hurried for naught;
Perplexed and tumultuous, vainly they sought,
Until 'gainst the beach and each other they broke
And sank in the ocean from whence they arose,
Unknowing the cause that disturbed their repose.

While musingly sitting and watching the wave,
I sighed, for I thought what a likeness it gave
Of man—of his birth, of his life and his grave!—
Ah, earth was once calm as the slumberful sea,
And calm as the unwakened wavelet slept we,
'Till powers mysterious passing above
Awoke us as wind-wakened wavelets, to rove
A-murmur, perplexedly, searching in vain
The cause that awoke us from peace into pain!—
Tumultuous, blinded, 'gainst blind things to beat,
'Till crumbled to earth we fell at the feet
Of those who rush o'er us a like doom to meet!
Ah, knowing what more than knoweth the wave,
The power that woke us so madly to rave?

SUMMER RAIN.

I.

Low thunder mutters in the distant west;
Yet from horizon rim to rim is seen
No cloud to mar the perfect blue serene.
The airs are hushed; no softest winds molest
The tasselled grass or topmost leafy crest.
Soon 'long the west dark cloud-peaks lift and lean,
And grow upon the skies with sullen mien,
As monsters grim, of dire intent possessed!
From somber peak to peak quick lightnings leap;
Roll ever and anon far thunders deep—
A mocking bird fills in each interval.
Now sudden fresh'ning winds, such as fore-run
The rain, strike in the leaves,–quenched now the sun,
And shadows cool and sweet envelop all!

II.

Begins the rain! The big drops here and there
At first make little puffs of dust along
Bare roads. The swallows keep their happy song,
Cleaving with pinions glad the rain-sweet air
E'en to the door of the thunder's lair,
Mocking the lightning's fierce and fiery prong.
Now over all the skies the clouds are flung
And steadily the rain falls everywhere.
But soon a-west the blue sky gleams again
Through clouds wind curled; and ere the day is done,

Each blossom leaf and blade a-gleam with rain
Lend glory to the glory of the sun;
And day finds close amid the quirings
Of birds thrice happy for their rain-splashed wings!

I LOVE THEE NOW.

I love thee, love thee! but how long
My love shall last I do not know,—
Yes, love thee with a love so strong
I feel not death might it o'erthrow!
Yet, that I do the truth no wrong,
I will but say, "I love thee now!"

I love thee!—but I've loved before,
And changed, I scarce knew why or how;
And love I deemed might e'er endure
The flow of time, changed with time's flow!
Then could I justly say aught more
Than only this: "I love thee now?"

I love thee, love thee! and could swear
No change my love shall ever know:
For when was ever one so fair,
And worthy to be loved, as thou?
Oh, then must I such oath forbear,
And only say: "I love thee now?"

No, no; I feel that I should lie
In letting not my lips avow

That which my soul doth testify!—
I love thee! and my love shall know
No change as fleeting years go by!
I'll love thee aye as I love now!

THE WIND AND THE TREE.

For eon and eon and eon,
The winds and the trees have been playmates
And daily have played them together!
So when in the arms of the breezes
I look on some fair tree with branches
A-toss and a-dance and a-murmur,
I can but believe that the winds are
A tree's sweet desire, fulfilling
A yearning and want of its being!—
I can but believe it rejoicing,
And thrilled of delicious emotion,
At the kiss of the dallying breezes
That wake from its foliage a-murmur
As sweet as the sighs and the whispers
At meeting of lover and lover!

SUMMER'S LAMENT.

An Allegory.

"O Autumn! take again your gold
  And give my flowers back to me;
My precious flowers that I sold
  You for your gold, oh, sinfully!
Ah, you were wiser, and you knew
Full well I should the bargain rue.

"'Twas on an August afternoon,
  When languidly in woods I strolled
And listened to my dove's soft croon,
  That Autumn brought some leaves of gold
Far brighter than my brightest bloom
That breathed along my path perfume.

"And there he said to me: 'Behold!
  I am the master of this art;
I touched and turned these leaves to gold;
  And a like beauty can impart
To this vast wood! Lo, 'fore thee stands
One who is blest with Midas hands!

" 'All leaves that cling about thee here—
  Nay, all as far as thou canst see,—
Them will I touch and make as fair
  As these I bring and show to thee,
If thou wilt give these flowers sweet
  That bloom above and 'bout thy feet.'

"My flowers I so long had seen,
I had forgot their preciousness;
Yea, 'gan to hold a blessing mean
Because it had not ceased to bless!—
And so I listened, and behold,
I gave my flowers for his gold!

"Yea, gold I have, gold everywhere;
Beneath my feet, above my head;
Gold floating downward through the air;
Through golden Palaces I tread;
But where was once my flowers' breath,
I breathe the scent of dust, and death!

"Yea, here mid brilliancy of gold,
I walk with shadow on my heart;
Here where in happiness I strolled
Ere Midas Autumn came athwart
My path, and I my flowers gave
And took his gold to deck—my grave!

"Ah, heavy weighs my sin on me,
That I should sell my flowers so!—
The winds blow gold from every tree
That 'round me drifts like yellow snow;
The winds do see my sin, my fear,
And fling me gold with mock and jeer!

"Some nameless presence seems to haunt
My steps, and brood portentously
Along my path my soul to daunt;
I turn, but ah, it turns with me.

And like a destiny intrudes
And still before in silence broods!

"I woke me from a troubled sleep;
  A raven o'er my head did croak;
A chill as of death's touch did creep
  E'en to my heart; the sad winds spoke
Like spirits, as with leaves of gold
They wove a shroud my form to hold.

"A phantom clothed in gold and crowned
  In gold, a golden wand did wave,
And pointed to a mossy mound
  That wore the semblance of a grave!—
My brain is troubled, and I see
Strange shadows point and beckon me!"

Thus stricken Summer made lament
  Through Autumn's forests as she strolled:
More feeble and more lowly bent
  Each day, as thinner and more cold
Life's currents crept; whilst mockfully
Gold rained on her from every tree.

At length, one morn, she followed on
  As if some spirit led her so;
On to a nook to her well known
  When birds did sing and blossoms blow:
But reaching it, what found she there?
Ah, hated gold, gold everywhere!

Her end was near; she sank o'er come,
  And lying so, she wept and wept;

Anon her sobs and sighs were dumb;
  She slept, a peaceful slumber slept,—
And death up crept as shadows creep.
And took her from the arms of sleep!

The trees rained down their leaves of gold
  To cover her; the winds did weave
Of golden leaves a shroud to hold
  Her form; which sighfully they leave
And mount to leafless branch and limb
Above, to sing her requiem!

Thus lay she till the angel Spring
  Did ope the door of her tomb;
Again her birds above her sing,
  Again her flowers 'round her bloom;
So with death's dreamless slumber o'er,
She woke nor deemed she'd lived before.

So when in August's languid days
  Wise Autumn comes to her again,
Once more she'll listen to his praise
  Of Midas' art, until she fain
Doth give her flowers for his gold,
And so repeat her sorrows old.

I ONLY KNOW.

Or whether that thou lovest me or not,
I may not tell;
I only know that, vain or not my love,
I love thee well!

Or whether I be worthy of thy love
I may not say;
I only know that daily to such end
I strive and pray!

I know not if another love thee more
Than I may love;
I only know I love thee with all depth
My heart can prove!

Or whether I could make thee happy—ah,
I know not this!
I only know 'twer raptest joy to be
Thy happiness!

THE SOWER AND THE SEED.

From out his hand a thousand seed
Abroad a sower flung;
Some fell where thistle sprang, and weed,
Some barren stones among:

And some in fallow soil fell,
And sprang to life, and flourished well.

Abroad upon the field of life
  A thousand souls God sowed;
Some fell 'mong sorrow, want and strife,
  Some fell in sin's abode;
And some where peace and plenty is,
And wisdom, love and righteousness.

And who is there those seed to blame
  That fell on sterile earth
And perished there, or springing came
  To beauty not, nor worth?
And those that fell in fertile ways,
And flourished, who will give them praise?

And who will blame those souls God-sown,
  Mid sin's and want's distress
That fell and died, or grew unknown
  To good or loveliness?
And who will praise those souls that fell
'Mong good, and brought forth good as well?

ALL THINGS BUT REST.

No longer, O Life! in thy store
  Hast any surprises for me;
As days that have gone on before
  I know that the morrow shall be;

Its hours shall kiss me and sting me;
With pain or with bliss wring my breast,
And all things save one will it bring me—
Ah, all things but rest!

Our slumber is fitful with dreaming;
Thought tortures us while we are wake;
Thy real, O Life! or thy seeming,
Bid ever sweet rest us forsake.
Through days and through nights are we driven
In fruitful, yet unfruitful, quest;
For all things save one are we given,—
Yea, all things but rest!

Yea, happiness, love, hate and sorrow,
O Life, for the present, thou hast;
Hope hast thou and fear, for the morrow,
And tears and regret for the past!
Love hast thou, and fame, gold and glory,
Yea, all things man maketh his quest,
From childhood to age bowed and hoary—
All, all things but rest!

How like is death, Life, or unlike thee?
Is death but the flesh losing hold,
That man, here a worm, wake a Psyche
On pinions of azure and gold?
Or has death no joy, no sorrow,
Nor aught that is blest nor unblest,
No past and no present, nor morrow,
But rest—only rest?

Thou answerest not! for none knoweth
  Or wherefore or what death may be:
We know that man cometh and goeth,
  But further than that none may see!
Death's realm is a mystical island,
  None knoweth what strange skies beneath:
And waters all shadowed and silent,
  Death's kingdom enwreathe.

These waters—how wide?—none explore,
  Returning its wonders to tell:
But all who set sail from life's shore,
  Are bidden forever farewell!
No word and no sign and no token
  They give us their absence to cheer,
But through shadows and silence unbroken,
  Sail, God knoweth where!

Yet, Life! so reposeful this ocean;
  So far seems it flowing from strife:
So free from all storms and commotion;
  So unlike to thee, is it, Life!
That fain I my spirit would flatter,
  That the one thing by thee unpossessed,
Death holds in his silence and shadow,—
  Ah, rest—perfect rest!

SLUMBER.

A weirdness is there, O Slumber,
  An awfulness in thy embrace!
A loneness thy presence doth cumber,
  That starts us to look on thy face!

What art thou, O Slumber? death's shadow?
  The twilight of death's utter night,
That, falling on life-given matter,
  Thou quellest its motion and might?

Thine is it, as death's is, to sever
  The soul from its dwelling of clay?
Save only he parts them for ever,
  And thou for a night or a day!

Each unto thy keeping commends him
  As lone as when under the sod
He goeth,—ah, no one attends him
  Beyond thy dim portals but God!

Yea, love we, and loved be soever,
  We must bid and be bidden farewell
At thy portal, O Slumber, and sever,
  And lonely go with thee to dwell!

How like unto sepulcher lonely,
  The couch where thy occupant lies,
In silence of midnight when only
  The hearth-cricket calls and replies!

Though near be thy couches and many.
When deeply thou broodest o'er all,
What sleeper there recketh if any
Be near him, or none be at all?

Forget we that sky, sea or earth is,
Forget if time hasten or creep:
Forget we that mourning or mirth is,
Forget that we sleep, and we sleep!

Forget we a God there above is,
Or demon down under the deep;
Forget we that hate is, or love is,
Forget that we sleep, and we sleep!

Forget whether night be or day be,
Forget that or sow we or reap;
Forget what we've been, be, or may be,
Forget that we sleep, and we sleep!

Ah, Slumber, with terror were fraught all
Our hearts if but paused we to think,
Ere entering thy shadowy portal!
Ere drinking thy lethean drink!

So like unto death art thou, Slumber,
Who giveth his lethe to sip,
Forever the soul shutting from her
Earth-house, with his cup at our lip!

Ah, how may we know but thou'lt sever,—
When once that we lie in thy power,—

The soul from the body forever,
  Instead of divide them an hour?

Yea, Slumber, how know we but death may
  Steal life from thine arms borne so near,
And our poor body a sheath lay,
  Made empty to thee unaware?

But, Slumber, thou stealest so gently
  Thy presence doth make us forget
Thy presence, till silent and spent lay
  The body without a regret!

Thou stealest our soul as from blossom
  Its fragrance is wooed by the breeze;
Our being sinks lost in thy bosom,
  As snow-flake in tropical seas!

O Slumber, when death would come to me,
  My being from earth aye to blot,
As wooest thou, so may he woo me,
  So gently, I yield, knowing not!

May he find me with thee, nor awake me,
  But, softly as shadows that creep,
From out of thine arms may he take me,
  Who dreams of no change in my sleep!

A DEW-DROP.

I.

I would that my birth and my life and my death,
  O gentlest dew, were as thine!
For unto naught else that draweth life's breath
  Can life ever seem so divine.

The bright sun has set, and the stars bloom above
  As night-blooming flowers below;
The fire-fly lighteth his lantern to rove,
  As seeking night's secret to know.

Day's sounds are all hushed and their echoes have died;
  All day-wearied things seek repose;
The night-moth and bat together now glide
  Betwixen the star and the rose.

On beam of a star this magical hour
  It is thou descendest to earth,
And tremblingly lie on the breast of a flower;
  And this is the way of thy birth!

II.

The nightengale singeth in star-litten bower;
  The cricket its blithe song repeats;
The night zephyr's wander from flower to flower,
  Till faint with their burden of sweets.

The soft light of stars, like a silvery rain,
  In silence descends to the earth;
The rivulet laughs like a blithe fairy train
  All giving wild vent to their mirth.

Thus night's hours pass them enchanted away,
  Unmarred by a moment of strife,
Till songs of a thousand glad birds hail the day,
  And this is the way of thy life!

III.

The East groweth brighter; night's shadow recedes;
  The bright stars dissolve in the sky;
Each living thing wakes with such joy it heeds
  Not that of its fellow near by!

The soft winds awake with the dawning of light.
  And wander like spirits that bless;
At touch of their feet sleeping waters grow bright;
  All flowers grow sweeter they kiss.

A golden beam enters the rose where you lie
  Entranced by its beauty and breath,
And wakes thee and takes thee a-back to the sky,
  And this is the way of thy death!

DEATH.

Some say it is an endless sleep—this death;
A dreamless sleep, a nothingness, wherein
An hour and an æon are as one;
And silence of annihilation broods
Beyond the voice of God to enter it.

Some say to die is to rewake transformed
And glorified, to enter endless life,
As much above this mortal life we know,

As is the butterfly above the worm
That died to give it birth and free its wings
To float on fragrant winds from rose to rose.

And some have said the dead become as ghosts,
And haunt the sphere where they have lived and died,
And sighing vainly for this life, they pass
With viewless form and step imponderable,
Among the quick; unfelt, unseen, unheard.

And some have said there is an under world
Of shadow where departed souls must go,
And there themselves as sighful shadows roam,
Blown as a withered leaf on idle winds,
With sadful thoughts of days that are no more,
And with no hope that they may be again.

And some have said the liberated soul
Becomes again incarnated on earth,
And walks another human being here.
And in the transmigration of the soul
Some hold belief; and say the soul, death-freed,
Then enters in some lower form of life—
In reptile, beast or bird, which e'er affords
In character the more congenial friend.

Ah, men have hoped and feared all things of death,
But nothing known! Since the beginning, men
Have looked into the grave and felt despair,
And looked up to the stars and drank of hope;
And with this hope and fear within his heart—
Like earth revolving through the night and day,

Through Mays and through Decembers—man hath lived
Knowing no more and no less of death.

The scientist, with glass and crucible,
Hath fused, congealed, divided, multiplied
All elements about him. He hath peered
Into Infinity with telescope,
And stood appalled to find unnumbered worlds
And suns and systems rolled before his ken!—
Then turned with microscrope to view a grain
Of dust that floated in the air he breathed,
And peopled like a world with teeming life!
Yet when each day of toilsome research
Was ended, still life's mystery and death's
Stood there no nearer solved; and he hath sought
His couch with nothing better in his heart,
Than hope and fear.

The man who spends his life
In monastery walls, and prays more oft
Than he takes food or drink, no more may tell
Us what is life or death; but rises from
His knees with nothing better in his heart
Than hope and fear. Ay, all, all prayer since man
First fell upon his knees with clasping hands,
Hath been in vain to draw death's secret forth
And give man certainty for hope and fear!

Life is incertitude; life's vital law
Is hope and fear; these counter forces serve
To balance life and keep it in its sphere,—
Centripetal, centrifugal, are they.

To know death's secret, were to break these laws
And cast life from its orbit; 'twere to put
Aside incertitude for certainty;
Annulling life by slaying hope and fear.

Therefore, who prays to put away all fear,
Or seeks to solve the mystery of life,
Doth pray and seek for death; and therefore prays
And seeks in vain; for God will not vouchsafe
To man a knowledge fatal to his life.

YOUR CREED AND MINE.

Thy creed religious is an optic glass,
Adapted to the vision of thy soul,
That clearlier thou might'st look up to God,
And see more visibly thy duty here.
And as the glasses for thine outward eye
May aid thy sight, yet serve mine but to blear,
So may'st thy creed that aids thy soul to see,
But blear or blind the vision of mine own.

There is no creed by which men live and die,—
How crude soever in its formula,
Or false or blasphemous to thou or I,—
But is divine unto its followers,
And was, if any, handed down of God.
No creed is there but for its devotees
Must image their ideal of a God,
And point their highest duty unto him,

As they are fit such duty to conceive.
No creed, therefore, but does divinely serve
To lift its devotees to higher grounds.
The doubter, infidel, the heretic,—
Their creed, or their no-creed? Divine also,
As thine or mine that holds them blasphemous!

What here is said may be by thee denied;
For, in religion, many be I know
Who could not feel that they were in the right
Unless they felt all others in the wrong.
Then if thou should condemn my creed as false,
And hold thine own as that alone of God,
I will not quarrel nor will take offense,
For here I see intolerance a thing
Essential to thy faith,—yea, of thy creed
A vital element, vouchsafed of God,
Since, as to thee, divine is its effects,
Making, to thee, God's love for thee more plain,
More strong and palpable thy hope beyond!

THE MOTHER.

I saw a mother seated once;
  Her children 'bout her played;
And as she sat and musing watched,
  Her heart was proud and glad.

There was a something in her eye
  Between a smile and tear;

There was a sense within her heart
Of gratitude and prayer.

"Ah, proud and happy mother!"—thus
I said with deference due—
"Which one of these shall bring you shame,
And which shall honor you?

"Which bring you honey, and which bring
You rue in honey's stead?"
She looked up at me woundedly,
Then thus to me she said:

"I do not know: I only know
Each is alike my care;
That equally for each ascends
To God my fervent prayer!

"I do not know: I only know
Or honor me or shame,
That each, while life is in this heart,
Its equal love shall claim!

"I do not know: I only know
Should this or that one prove
Its mother's death, yet, slaying her,
He can not slay her love!"

GIFTS OF THE GODS.

Ah, why so softly round him tread?
  None may disturb his sleep!
Why stand and weep above his head?
  'Twere well to laugh as weep!

For do you know what is this death,
  That weep you, thus undone?
May not it be who yields his breath
  A better thing has won?

Oh, foolish one! why weep and weep,
  Nor know whyfore thy tears?
Why let dark fears thy spirit steep,
  Nor know whyfore thy fears?

Go, lightly tread the ways of life,
  Nor weep that death must be;
Put down thy foolish fears of strife
  That may not come to thee.

Behold yon grass and flowers throng
  Where death his couch has spread;
Behold the sunlight, here the song
  Of birds above the dead!

Go, gaily tread about the tomb,
  As in thy garden plot;
Where sunbeams laugh and flowers bloom,
  Sure thou should'st sorrow not.

Both life and death are gifts to thee,
  And by the gods bestowed;
Why cling to one and seek to flee
  The other as abhorred?

Go, spend thy life as spending gold;
  Prize thou each passing breath;
But know thou hast no right to hold
  Life worthier than death!

THREE WORDS.

Thy letter is received and 'gainst my heart
It nestles while I write. To me it came
Clad like a god in glory—crowned with gold
And shod with golden sandals. With these words,
These three brief words, "I love thee!" it began,
And its last words were as its first, "I love thee!"

Oh, say again, again, and yet again,
These words: "I love thee!" Thou canst not utter them
As often as my soul would drink their sound.
Were every leaf that whispers in the breeze;
Were every note of bird this morn in June;
Were every wavelet lisping to the shore
Thy voice to whisper in mine ears these words:
"I love thee, love thee, love thee!" ah, my soul
Would drink each syllable insatiably,
And never deem it repetition where
Each repetition were an added bliss.

Out of my window, as I write these lines,
A bird it sitting on a topmost spray,
Out-pouring its sweet soul into the skies,
The hollow, boundless skies that bend above
And drink each note with quenchless hunger still.
Ah, make into a song these words: "I love thee,"
And sing it to my soul, which, like yon skies,
Shall bend above with hunger infinite!

MEMORY AND HOPE.

I.

We backward look through memory
As through the eye of hope we see,
Both magic lights, beneath whose beams
No thing is yet the thing it seems;
Both are by that enchantment fair
Which distance lendeth them to wear.

II.

Aye, aye, as sail we down life's stream,
Afar behind us brightly gleam
The waters; and before us, lo,
Afar the waters brightly glow!
Meanwhile, how lusterless and grim
The leaden waters round us swim!
And yet these waters sail we o'er
Once more the light of yon before;

And, passed, with kindling light will blind us
As now yon waters far behind us!

III.

Ah, hope and memory are one;
Both, distance are, which looked upon
Enchant us but because afar,
As glitters yonder distant star
While earth, the star on which we tread,
A thing seems lusterless and dead.

IV.

Then what are hope and memory
But shadows—shadows bright which be
To blind us from reality?
Ah, what are memory and hope
But slumber which to us doth ope
The gate of dreams where through we see
What hath not been, nor yet may be?

V.

And yet our tears, our smiles we give
To Hope and Memory; we live
In them, the while to-day alone,
Goes by us in oblivion!
Then, after all, may it not be
They are the one reality,
The while the present, which we deem
The real, is the only dream?

AT THE ALTAR.

The bridal rose within her hair is not
More pure or more fair than she, this bud
Of womanhood, who 'fore the altar stands,
The light of love and hope within her heart
Doth halo her with radiance that makes
Her loveliness thrice lovely, and doth light
For her the world with light of Paradise!

O groom! kneel daily thou, and thank God for
The gift He hath bestowed—the loveliness
And love of such an one! And for such boon
Him daily thanking, Him as often pray
To make thee worthy her, and give it thee
To help her realize in coming years
The hope and love that now illumes her life
With light as sweet as that the angels know!

IF I HAD KNOWN.

I.

If I had known—
Last eve I left her standing in the door,
With eyes that fondly followed as I went—
That I should see her living never more,
Each priceless moment till death's dart was sent,
I had been by her with her hand in mine,

Speaking love-words and hearing her replies:
I had been by her gazing in her eyes
Till life and love ceased in their depths to shine—
If I had known!

II.

If I had known—
When with a mind perplexed of trifles vain,
Last eve I left her with one brief caress—
That death should kiss those lips ere I again,
I had not left her with that only kiss,
Nor with an hundred, nor a thousand, no!
But I had kissed her till death's lips had come
'Twixt mine and her's and left her's cold and dumb,
And left her cheeks as cold and white as snow—
If I had known!

III.

If I had known—
When turned I at the gate and saw her stand,
With look that seemed betwixt a smile and tear,
Which I but answered with a kiss of hand—
Oh, had I known death stood to her so near,
I had knelt down and prayed me in such way
That heartless death for once had found a heart
And in strange pity put aside his dart,
Nor mine were these vain, bitter tears today—
If I had known!

IV.

If I had known—
Last eve I left her of glad life possessed,
That even then death poised at her his dart,

Oh, her so closely in my arms I'd pressed,
So wound and bound and hid her in my heart,
That death his fatal aim had sought in vain,
And baffled so, had left unscathed her form;
Or, if despite my care, had dealt her harm,
The blow that slew her me with her had slain—
If I had known!

SHALL NOT SUCH BE?

I.

In day's sad absence earth in silence mourns
Till every blade and leaves and flower droops,
Weighed down with dewy tears in darkness shed.
The sad stars burn like holy taper lit
About a shrine of mourning; like a sob
The muffled murmur of the ocean comes,
And like a sigh the sound of winds that rove,
Swaying the sable plumage of the trees.

II.

Thus earth bemoans day's absence, till again
Sweet day returns to kiss the shadows from
Her brow, give songs where sounds of sorrow were,
Put out the sad, dim stars with greater light,
And by his presence turn to gems her tears
That now from leaf and blade and flower gleam,
Mirroring the rapture of her heart.

III.

Shall not thy day return, O shadowed heart?
And bid disperse thy darkness, giving song

And sounds of joy where sounds of sorrow are,
Quenching with light the far, faint stars of hope,
Turning dull tears of grief, in darkness wept,
To gems that glisten on the robe of joy?
Shall not such be? I hope, and by this hope
I wait, I weep, yet gather strength to bear,
As by her stars earth weeps and waits for dawn!

A SONG.

To me there is such music in her name,
Such magic sweet,
That if my foe were heard to speak the same,
I'd cease to hate!

Her voice, her glance, her smile is rapture's sting
Unto my soul;
And in her presence, hope doth fold its wing!—
Hath found its goal!

As glist'ning drop of dew within a rose,
By morn is kist,
Until, dissolved, ecstaticly it flows,
A roseate mist,

So doth the magic of her beauty smite
My heart, until,
It is dissolved and lost in a delight
Ineffable!

As 'bout some flowers blooming in completeness,
A soft wind sighs,
Until it swooneth with its stolen sweetness,
And silent lies,

Oh ! so my thoughts, entranced upon her dwell,
Until they faint
E'en with the bliss they have no words to tell,
Nor power to paint !

AHASUERUS.

(According to the legend, the Wandering Jew was a shoemaker and bore the name "Ahasuerus." Christ, bearing the cross, and on his way to the place of crucifixion, paused for rest before the door of Ahasuerus, who struck him, saying tauntingly: On! Why dost thou linger?" Christ replied: "I go, but thou shalt remain a wanderer till my return.")

At midmost noon of night he stood
Alone upon a mountain brow,
And on the plain that spread below
Two sleeping cities dimly viewed.
The city of the living slept
Beside the city of the dead;
And each an equal silence kept
Beneath the moonlight sadly shed.

And where above them through the day
The happy swallow winged the blue,

Now bats, night's songless swallows, flew
Phantom-like on wings of gray;
While ghostly lights and shadows, born
As souls beneath the ban of God,
Stood in Life's City, paved of stone,
And in Death's City, paved of sod.

He was as one who stood alone
Amid a universe of death;
The stars above, the plain beneath,
The glassy sea without a moan—
All slept: the lights and shadows slept;
The mountain, from its cone of gray
To where its basic forests swept
In ebon gloom, a-slumber lay.

He stood some moments there a-gaze,
The trail of centuries on his brow;
His beard's and hair's abundant flow
Streamed 'round him like a hoary maze—
He stood and gazed with yearning eyes
Upon the city of the dead,
Asleep beneath the star-lit skies,
From which there seemed benignly shed

An opiate of rest to all—
All things save he. "Ah, all things rest,"
He sighed, "All, all save I are blest
With sleep or death! When wilt thou call,
O death? When unto me be given
That which to Him I did deny?

These centuries—have not they shriven
My sin? Deserve I not to die?

"Have I not earned that cup they've quaffed,
Yon dreamless slumberers, who sleep
Beneath cool cypren shadows deep,
Beneath the cold, white marble shaft?"—
He sudden ceased; such agony
Shown on his brow as Christ's had shown
When, pausing, on his way to die,
One rudely struck and bade him on!

"On, on!" a voice now stern and low,
Spake and hissing lightnings flash;
"I go," he cried, "Withhold thy lash,
Withhold, withhold, I go, I go!"
So passed he down the mountain-side—
His beard across his shoulder blown—
With naught his weary steps to guide,
With no command save this one: "On!"

A QUESTION UNANSWERED.

Once in my rambles in the days of June,
I came upon an idle boy who lounged
Beside a meadow brook, and for the while
Amused himself with flinging pebbles at
The butterflies that clustered at its marge.

Beneath a falling pebble, here and there,
A butterfly lay crushed, while others, maimed,

Made struggle vain and desperate for flight;
And others still, affrighted, fluttered 'round
In consternation and wild wonderment
At what the cause mysterious could be
That thus had slain or maimed their brethren,
And threatened all with equal violence.

Awhile I mused upon the scene, then said:
"As here this idle boy pebbles fling
Among these butterflies, and sits amused
To see disaster and confusion wrought
Among them, may not idle gods
That lounge above, with wanton will fling down
Among mankind, earthquake and pestilence,
And war and flood and famine, flame and storm,
And so amuse themselves at man's despair,
His consternation and wild wonderment,
His prayers and curses said alike in vain?

"For who is there to stay the hands of gods
From the infliction of a wanton pain,
If there be none to stay this boy's hand?
Ay, who will shield man from mere cruelty,
If there be none to shield a butterfly?
If man upon the creatures under him,
May so inflict a wanton violence,
May not the gods make toys of man's pain?
Yea, would the needless suffering of man,
Inflicted to amuse the lounging gods,
Accord less with the 'holy scheme of things'
Than doth the agony of butterflies
That suffer to amuse this idle boy?"

SENILITY.

I stood upon the peopled streets
  Within a mighty town,
And watched the motley stream of folk
  As flowed it up and down;
And now a picture gladdened me,
  Now filmed mine eyes with tears;
And now a picture kindled hope,
  Now wakened brooding fears.

The blind and maimed before me passed;
  Childhood and manhood's prime;
The sunny tress, the raven lock,
  And age's hoary rime;
Passed faces sweet of innocence;
  The virtue guided soul;
Passed faces such as darkly said:
  "Here lusts and sins control."

Passed hunger, passed the surfeited;
  Passed want and opulence;
Passed culture and philosophy,
  And darkest ignorance;
Passed rosy health and pale disease;
  Passed sloth and energy;
Passed love and hate, and joy and woe,
  Pride and humility.

Yet of all pictures that I saw,
  Which made me sad to see,

The one that smote me bitterest,
  Was bowed Senility!
Its shuffling gait, its shrunken form,
  Its withered cheek and brow:
Its mumbled, sad soliloquy,
  Its pulse's feeble flow.

For the deformed, the blind and maimed,
  Or the diseased, and those
Whose sins and lusts, 'tis said, the gates
  Of heaven 'gainst them close—
The lot of these was dark indeed,
  And pitiful, I wot,
But I, beholding such, could hope
  Their's n'er may be my lot.

But, lo! this senile form that crept
  Low bowed 'neath weight of years:
This I beheld too deeply smit
  And bitterly, for tears!
Beheld and felt for once how vain
  And weak are hope and prayer!
Beheld and felt upon my heart
  The shadow of despair!

For this sad lot shall be mine own,
  Lest death cut short life's span—
Ah, death, that sums all bitterness
  Conceivable to man!—
Ay, ay, this lot shall surely be,
  One day my lot as well;
When prayer can alter this, then prayer
  May spring the gates of hell!

DAWN.

The coming day shot on his shafts a head,
Which lightning flashed along the eastern sky,
Betokening sublimely from afar
His coming glory awful as a God's.

And night, that brooded over sleeping earth
Like some dark thing whose presence poisons sleep.
Now as some evil thing at God's approach,
Out spread her ebon pinions and took flight,
Dark'ning the west with her descending plumes.

And earth awakes embathed in icy dews,
As if in slumber she had grappled with
Some horrid dream that made sleep agony,
And left the cold drops beaded on her brow.

But soon the God of day her brow has kissed,
And she smiles back, forgetting her dark dream.
And happy is as if no night had been,
And blessed day should ne'er be gone again.

INVOCATION.

O Memory! from yesterday
Awake no hour,
But that for whose return I'd pray
If prayer had power!

Wake thou no past that wakes to be
My soul befretting;
Let me forget, where memory
Were vain regretting!

O Hope! let play thy lambent beam
Along the morrow;
Though sorrow come, let me not dream
Of coming sorrow!

With blossoms hide each thorn of pain
And sorrow nearing;
Let me not know and fear where vain
Were knowing, fearing!

DECREPITUDE.

Thin, snowy locks about his temples spread:
Age-shrunken form, time-furrowed cheek and brow,
An old man sat beside the hearth's warm glow,
As silent seeming as might sit the dead—
Save from his eyes a tender light was shed,
Born of fond memories of long ago,
Which stir his chilling blood to warmer flow,
While he forgets death's nearing, phantom-tread.
I minded was of some old ruin lit
Most plaintively with eve's departing beam,
While night, from out the east, on soundless feet
Draws nearer with a shroud to cover it
And wrap it in dark slumber without dream,
Till god-like morn bids wake in light complete.

THE WIND IN THE WHEAT.

Oh, what delight, this sweet June morn,
To sit here under this tree,
Where the broad fields roll away and away,
Like a billowy, emeral sea;
To sit and list to the song of birds,
With the cool, lush grass at my feet;
To catch the breath of the June-kissed breeze
As I watch the wind in the wheat!

The bending skies, with here and there
A white cloud drifting by,
In all the seeming peace of souls
Whose mansion is the sky;
The dark, swift shade of a passing cloud
Goes by on soundless feet,
Chased by the laughing light of the sun,
As I watch the wind in the wheat!

The swallows skim the waving grain
And chase its billows free,
As gulls, in sport, when the waves are high,
Fly 'long the troughs of the sea;
The butterfly floats like a blossom in air,
The bee bends the bloom at my feet;
Oh, Time goes by on soundless wings
As I watch the wind in the wheat!

One year ago—one year to-day,
And I sought this self-same place,
But one sat then beside me here,

Who might lend to heaven a grace;
Ah, I marked nor cloud nor sky nor sun,
Nor light and shadows fleet:
I marked nor swallow nor flower nor bee,
I saw not the wind in the wheat.

As stars are lost in the light of the dawn,
So these in her beauty did hide:
As joy is lost in the rapture of love,
So these in her presence had died!
Oh, sweeter than blossom or bird or bee,
Oh, sweeter than all things sweet,
Are the thoughts of her that come to me
As I watch the wind in the wheat!

A FRAGMENT.

(Sylvanus and Clementina were a Roman youth and maiden living under the reign of Constantine I. They were lovers. She was a christian, and of a religious temperament fervently devout; while he, religiously, was agnostic or skeptical.)

CLEMENTINA.

But tell me if thou art an atheist?
Not that I judge by ought I see in thee;
Thou seemest all that deepest faith might make,
Save at the temple thou art seldom seen,
And they do say thou art religionless.

SYLVANUS.

Nay, nay, sweet saint, they do misjudge me, yea;
I am religious and a worshipper.
Love's my religion and my saint art thou!
To thee I kneel and worship—only thee;
Kneel I in prayer, 'tis thine the face I see;
Of dream or thought thou ever art the theme,
And if I hope, 'tis not for endless life,
But for thy love which ever seemeth all!
'Twixt me and God thou standest, shutting out
Him from the vision of my soul alway.

CLEMENTINA.

How blindly I am serving, then, my God!
I should show others unto God, not shut
Him from their vision, as thou chargest me.
Oh, say not I stand 'twixt thee and thy God,
Proving thy curse who would thy blessing prove!
If so, this life shall not thus God offend;
This brief earth life from out and back to dust;
For what is it when weighed against thy soul
That dies forever or forever lives!

SYLVANUS.

Hush, hush, fair saint! thou wrongest thy sweet self;
Thou wrongest God, and wrongest me also:
Wrongest thyself to charge thyself of wrong;
Wrongest thy God to deem He doth accuse
And hold thee guilty, guiltless as thou art;
And wrongest me in that thou would'st remove

Thyself, my saint, my star to which I look
And kneel and worship and grow nobler so!
Not God that loves and wills me highest good
Can ask me worship more divinity,
More purity and loveliness than that
Which my soul dreameth, dreaming, love, of thee!

CLEMENTINA.

Such can not save thy soul, thy deathless soul;
There is one God hath power this to save,
And He hath said, "I am a jealous God!"
He brooks no rivalry in worship—none!

SYLVANUS.

This God, then, blame thou for my loss of soul;
For whom save He hath made in thee to shine
So much of heaven as to fill my soul
And stay all dream, all prayer of else beyond?
While gaze we on the rainbow who can blame
That we wist not of fadeless skies beyond,
And even turn our backs upon the sun,
Forgetting He that painteth that sweet form
On which we gaze with ravishment of soul?
So hungers not my soul to see God's face
While it is thine that shuteth His from view!

CLEMENTINA,

[With hands joined in supplication.]

'Tis blasphemy! O God, forgive, forgive!
Strike him not down here in Thy holy wrath;
Strike me instead, who blindeth him to Thee,

If so his love unto Thee may be turned
And saved a soul from hell's undying death!

SYLVANUS.

O my sweet saint! Stay thou these holy tears;
Worship thou God and I will worship thee,
And as I grow more worthy of thy love,
I'll grow more worthy of the highest God!
And since through thee alone I can be saved,
Lay thou one hand in mine and one in God's,
Be that sweet link that binds me unto Him!

[He kneels to her, takes her hand and presses it to his lips.]

CLEMENTINA.

[Lifting her other hand to God.]

O Christ, this lifted hand! take it in Thine;
Two souls, not one, upon my steps depend!
Guide me henceforth through ways that pleaseth God,
And make in me so much of Thee to live
That he who loves me needs must love Thee more!

AFTER SUNSET.

A golden West;
A sense of rest
That stealeth as the dew on bower;
One trembling star
Seen faint and far
To open like a timid flower.

From vale and hill,
And woodland still,
Sweet odors rise and float and mingle:
O'er dewy wold
'Neath sunset's gold
Is heard a cow-bell's homeward tingle.

Where dying day
Turns blue to gray,
There circles yet a tardy swallow;
The fireflies
Begin to rise
From yonder deep and dewy hollow.

In evening's road
The dusky toad
With jewel eye a-shine is sitting;
Above, the bat,
This way and that,
Gray, through shadows gray, is flitting.

A mocking bird,
Now sudden heard,
Doth break the hush of twilight hour—
Clear, blithe and strong,
A Good-night song
Sung from the threshold of yon bower.

'Tis hushed—again
Doth silence reign,
Broke only by a cricket's singing.

Whose tiny notes
Through silence float
And seems the voice of silence ringing.

The last faint ray
Of dying day
In Western skies now feebly hovers;
Earth's shadows creep
More near, more deep—
But lo! the stars, the stars above us!

A NAMELESS GRAVE.

Here in deep forests where stupenduous trees,
Like hoary columns prop a leafy dome,
And cast below a soft, unbroken gloom,
Or broken only when some passing breeze—
In forest tops a murmur like far seas—
Let fitfully a sunbeam go and come;
Here where the forest flower's fragile bloom
Breathes out her soul in shadowed silences;
Here where the shades of twilight brood at noon;
Here where the wood-thrush her soft notes attune
So sadly sweet; here where dark mosses lave
The boles of trees; here where the horned snail
Around the cool, dark trunks her silvery trail
In silence draws—here sleeps a nameless grave!

NO MORE I KNOW.

I.

I may not tell whyfore am I, nor whence,
Nor whither go I hence;
I may not tell if it be doubt or faith
More justly judgeth death;
I only know
I woke from dreamless sleep;—yon skies bent o'er,
Earth lay beneath my feet; I looked before,
I looked behind and saw what now I see,
And saw I nothing more
But mystery—ah, mystery!—
No more I know.

II.

I know not if the gods enthroned above,
With wisdom rule and love;
Or if with madness or with malice they
Hold o'er our planet sway;
I only know
That thorns and flowers, lights and shadows strew
Our path; that love and hate, and false and true,
Alternate give us sorrow and delight;
That we fond hope pursue,
While fear hangs on our flight—
No more I know.

III.

I know not if death be an endless sleep,
Lethean, dreamless deep;

Or if some hand there be to reillume
Life's lamp beyond the tomb;
I only know
Death's cold and pallid face, the hush of breath,
The rayless eye and pulseless heart of death,
Bespeaketh peace, but peace as of despair;
Or at the best it saith:
"O man, hope thou and fear!"
No more I know.

ARIADNE.

So many graces sweet
About her hover,
That to behold her is
At once to love her.

But, ah, she is a rose
With thorn to prick you;
Her sweetest ways are wiles
And meant to trick you.

Now says her acts—or seem
To say, "I love you!"
Your soul seems lifted up
To skies above you!

But giving hope till you
For joy have shouted,
Straightway all you have hoped,
She bids you doubt it!

So does she dash your cup
With sweet and bitter
Till you grow wroth and swear:
"I will forget her!

"No longer I'll forgive
As I've forgiven!
No longer I'll be tossed
'Twixt hell and heaven!"

Ah, vainest threat! your chains
You can not sever;
But, once her slave, you are
Her slave forever!

Ah, gives she hope and doubt,
But wholly neither;
Alas! my days she casts
Like April weather.

Oh, would I wholly doubt
Or hope could cherish!
Oh, would she'd bid me live,
Or bid me perish!

WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

The dead are in the land of dreams,
For oft I meet them there;
And yet how far and which the way,
I may not this declare.

For sleep, death's brother, leadeth me,
  But blindfolds first mine eyes;
So hides the path beneath my feet,
  And hides above the skies.

But there I walk with vision clear;
  My dead walk at my side;
I speak to them, they speak to me,
  And I am satisfied.

For when with my departed ones
  The land of dreams I tread,
They do not know that I still live,
  Nor I that they are dead.

Nay, naught is changed; all are the same
  They were while here on earth,
Ere yet there was a vacant chair
  About our happy hearth.

Thus reunited, happily
  We talk, till Sleep mine eyes
Blindfolds again, and leads me back
  Beneath life's changeful skies.

But some day, Sleep, whose kingdom lies
  'Twixt Life's and Death's domain,
Shall lead me to the land of dreams
  Nor lead me back again.

But leave me with my loved ones gone,
  Forever comforted,
While they who walk the ways of life
  Will speak of me as dead.

TO A KATYDID.

Tell me, pray thee, what did Katie?
Ah, indeed it is a pity,
You from eve till dawn of day,
Will no further of her say—
Up there in the green leaves hid—
Than this only—
"Katydid!"

Was it right or was it wrong,
That she did? Ah, hold your tongue
Or tell all; with half a truth
You may slander one, in sooth,
Come out in the light of sun,
Tell me all or tell me none,
For now like some evil thing
You within deep shadows sing,
Darkly hinting things which you
Know within your heart untrue!
Tell me all, leave nothing hid—
What did Katie?
"Katydid!"

Was it wrong, and was it you
Whom the wrong was done unto?
Wrong so cruel, that its pain
Leaves all words to tell it vain;
And as one with grievance such
It his tongue doth overmatch,

So your wrong doth you forbid
To express it?
"Katydid!"

If not what she did, ah, then
Tell me where 'twas done and when?
Tell which Katie did it, too;
Katy did it—say that's true—
But which Katie? Katie who?—
Ah, you imp! you was a spy,
Then, on Katie, she and I?
You was in the tree above her
Where she lingered with her lover!
Up there in the green leaves hid,
When we paused and—
"Katydid!"

Well, what did we do or say
That was any harm, I pray?
As beneath that tree we stood
Did we as all lovers would,
When they deemed no one was near
Or to see them or to hear.
Never brighter moon had shone!—
Almost like the tell-tale sun,—
So I waited; it might be
Some eye envious should see.
Ah, from earth up to the moon,
Love is waited on! Full soon,
Clouds that drifted 'cross the sky,
Vailed the moon from view, and I

Kissed her while the moon was hid,
And she—kissed me!
"Katydid!"

By her kiss made bold to dare,
Then I said unto her there—
Deeming none save she should hear:—
"Katie, yonder starry skies—
Depth of which but God descries,
Looking from his throne above—
Are not deeper than my love—
Love for thee! One hope alone
Me has led, has me upborne,
Has lighted and ennobled life,
Has made me stronger than all strife!—
The hope some day to call thee wife!"
Here I caught her hand, and she
Sought it not from mine to free.
"Katie, I have long been thine,"
Said I, "will you now be mine?"
Light in temples and in cheek,
Spoke before her tongue could speak!
Eyes a-droop 'neath quiv'ring lid,
"Yes," she murmured—
"Katydid!"

Now, you night grasshopper, you,
Singing all the long night through;
Say what less or more there
Could have said or done such pair?
Green imp! in the green leaves hid,
All night saying "Katydid,"

Say it o'er and o'er and o'er
If you will, but say no more;
Then, but Katie, she and I,
May divine all you imply;
And—when leaves are turning red—
Comes the day when we shall wed,
Day of days divinely blest!
You I'll bid as wedding guest;
And my Katie, too, shall bid
You be present.

"Katydid!"

CAT AND MOUSE.

I saw a cat once leap and catch a mouse
And maim it with her savage fangs and claws,
Then box it sportfully about the room,
And gloatingly behold it feebly drag
Its bleeding limbs and body, crushed and torn,
And writhe and gasp in nameless agony!

And seeing this, I mused: "Why should this be?
Such cup of pain why should this sinless mouse
Be made to drink but to amuse a cat?—
Within God's scheme of things, to what wise ends
And laws necessitous, does this mouse drag
Its torn and bleeding entrails in the dust,
And serve as toy for a sportive cat?—

"Judged by phenomena does Nature seem
Nor moral nor immoral in her plan,—

Nor more nor less for evil than for good;
Nor more nor less for pleasure than for pain,
Nor more nor less for joy than for grief;
Nor more nor less for darkness than for light;
Nor more nor less for life than death, life's foe;
Nor more nor less for angel than for fiend!

THE EARTH A TOMB.

Here where the mighty plains outroll,
A gray and silent sea—
Where vastness and where silence broods
As of eternity—
Doth sleep a lonely grave, so old
None know how old it be.

A lonely grave? Ah, no; ah, no!
No grave may be alone,
For thicker far than are her leaves
The graves of earth are strown;
Beneath the wave and sod the dead
Do lie the dead upon!

All rock or dust of earth there be
Are ashes of the dead;
All life but springs from out a grave
And but by death is fed;
Life hath not where to rest its feet
Lest on a grave it tread.

Aye, aye; this floating sphere, the earth,
  Is but one mighty tomb,
Wherein all past life sleeps, and where
  Shall sleep all life to come—
To wake and sleep upon a grave,
  Is of all life its doom!

THE WOODS OF JUNE.

In leafy woods of June I rove,
  The lights and shadows lying
About my feet; soft winds above
  Through boughs umbrageous sighing.

On yonder bough that sunbeams steep,
  A bobolink is singing;
In yonder dell where shadows sleep,
  A wood-lark's notes are ringing.

Sweet flecks of blue sky glint and gleam
  Through high o'er-arching bower;
A butterfly, as if a-dream,
  Floats by—a winged flower!

The woodland grass and flowers sweet,
  In gentle winds are swaying;
A birdling flutters at my feet,
  Its first of flights essaying.

Like emerald flame the wild-grape vine
  From bough to bough leaps higher;
A trumpet bloom from nigh o'er head
  Drops like a flake of fire.

By sunflash lit, by shadows dimmed,
  The woodland pool lies sleeping:
By water-grass and lilies rimmed
  It lies, their image keeping.

The piping of a frog is heard
  Among its water-grasses;
A lythe and long-billed water-bird,
  Among its lilies passes.

On crystal airs wood odors swim
  And breath a nameless sweetness;
Through sun-flecked isles and vistas dim,
  Broods life's and love's completeness!

EPIGRAMS.

EPITAPH DEFINED.

A thing that lies above what lies below;
Wind-instrument which for the dead we blow;
An history as sweet as 'tis untrue:
An over-praise when blame no harm may do;

A romance which old satan smiling reads;
A lettered stone full soon o'er-grown of weeds.

THE MIGHTIER.

"The pen is mightier than the sword," so
A poet sang now many years ago;
But editors have often shown since then,
How mightier the scissors than the pen.

A SPOTLESS PAGE.

A spotless page,—ah, one should pause and think
Before he blots such purity with ink!
Should ask what he shall write, and ask if then
His page were worthy as if it were clean;
For writes he well whose page, when he has done,
Is worth so much as ere it was begun.

NATURE'S ART.

One time within the midmost days of June,
I wandered randomly and musefully
Beneath the moon.

I came upon a tarn that stagnant slept
Beneath a scum of green, where reptile croak
Of frog was kept.

Hard by, amid deep foliage of a tree,
A nightingale poured forth its soul in song
Of ecstacy.

And underneath that tree a glow worm gleamed
Among the dewy grass; above, the stars
Immortal beamed.

And underneath that tree a toad-stool oozed
Of rotting mould; near by a daisy slept
With petals closed.

I museful stood, a-thrill of subtle awe;
So wond'rously man's heart seemed typified
In what I saw.

Here, side by side, toad-stool and daisy grow—
So spring within the heart the sweet rose, joy,
And nightshade, woe!

Here glow-worm in the dust 'neath starlit skies—
So truth and mock-truth shine before the soul's
Bewildered eyes!

Here croak of frog and song of night's sweet bird—
So in the soul Doubt's demon croak and Hope's
Rapt song are heard!

I WOULD BELIEVE.

I would believe that we shall live again
  In realms beyond the touch of time that lie,
  Whose leaf and blossom are not born to die,
Nor whose delights spring from the womb of pain!
I would believe that in that blest domain

All highest hopes whose fruits earth did deny,
Shall there be realized, and we know why
That for our good our earthly life seemed vain!

I would believe we shall be loved and love
As raptly there always, as here an hour!
I would believe the nobler here we prove
The few brief days we tread earth's thorny sod,
The worthier beyond shall be our dower!—
If I but dream, make me no wiser, God!

I AM NOT CERTAIN.

The mansion and the hovel I behold;
Philosopher and fool I look upon;
I see the beautiful of body, mind
And character; the ugly, repellant
Of body, mind and character I see—
Lo, seemingly how great a difference
Between the lot of persons whom I meet!

And yet not certain I this difference
Is more than seeming; nay, not certain I
That 'twer essentially more fortunate
That you be born this personage than that;
Not certain but the bitter and the sweet
Are, after all, apportioned equally
Between all persons; not assured I
The words "unfortunate" and "fortunate,"
Have any meaning when profoundly weighed,
Or in God's lexicon are given place.

Not certain I that aught befalling you,
As by the highest wisdom understood,
Is either good for you are bad for you!—
Nay, for if a law of compensation be,—
And such must be, if this, God's universe,
Be ruled by perfect justice, equity—
This seeming great discrepancy between
The lot of persons is but seeming so,
Without existence in reality!

AVENGED.

Together down the garden walk they strolled;
The sky was yet a-flush with sunset glory:
And she was young and lovely to behold
As is the heroine of some love story;
And he was handsome and as bold was he,
As she was beautiful and maidenly.

Beside each rose that near their pathway grew,
She paused to say: "Oh, isn't that loveliness?"
And he said "yes"; but then he never knew,
For 'twas at her he looked while he said "yes".
The zephyrs kist and kist again her cheek
And in her tresses played at hide-and-seek.

He looked with envy on the zephyr's bliss,
And often sighed: "Oh, sure heaven this is:
To be a zephyr, free to steal a kiss
From cheeks like these, and dally in such tresses!"

And here he swore—that is, swore mentally—
To steal a kiss, whate'er results might be.

And soon a chance was happily presented;
Her cheek, by accident, was close to his—
"I must," he thought, "howe'er it be repented!"
He holds his breath, his heart he can't—a kiss!
When like a flash she turns and madly throws
And strikes him in the face—with what? A rose!

SONNET.

O, one more precious than my soul to me,
I would that thou might'st look into my heart
As with God's eyes, which no illusions thwart!
Yea, look into my heart, my soul, and see
How purely it is thine! how utterly!
How sweetly imaged ever there thou art!
How ev'ry bliss it knows, and ev'ry smart
And hope and doubt are worshipful of thee!
I often pray, but this the only prayer
Which daily, nightly unto Him above
I lift with soul of raptest fervency:
Make mutual this love for her I bear!
Oh, give her, God, to love me as I love,
And make me worthy to be loved as she!

O AUTUMN, SADFUL SWEET.

Lo! here within this garden close
Which yesterday the summer rose
  Made glorious, are petals strewn;
  Dismantled boughs; a cricket's croon;
A thistle-down that 'fore me blows.

O Autumn, sadful sweet! O days
Of silences, of dreamful haze!
  Days when a pathos haunteth stream
  And field and wood,—aye, sits a-dream
In even brightest sunlit ways!

Days ere dead Summer's wraith has yet
Withdrawn, but like some sweet regret
  Still pensive haunts the fields, the woods,
  And voiceless skiey solitudes
Where wind-blown leaves for swallows flit!

Days when through fields and woodland ways
We stroll with pensive, thoughtful gaze;
  In mood such as some pilgrim lone
  Might stroll old lands of glory gone,
Now lit of Memory's luna rays.

THE BURIAL.

'Twas as some perfect morn in sweetest May
Her life began in beauty, light and song.

And as such perfect morn, when overcome
Of sudden, tender rains, her life found close.

Was hers a face and form and character
That in their loveliness did so accord
As some divinest symphony. All men
Who looked on her within their spirits knelt,
And asked of God to make them worthier;
And life took on some sweet and subtile grace
And nobleness, not known to them before.

So while she walked the earth before men's eyes,
Unconscious as the rose of its own charm
Of outward grace and inward purity,
Her presence wrought as some divine appeal
To man from God!—all could but nobler be
Who came within her beauty's magic spell.

Towards the little church yard on the hill
The cortege moved with solemn, muffled tread,
In silence broken but of sob or sigh.
And there while God smiled in the daisied grass,
And in the sunlit blue that bent above,
And spake through happy heart of mocking bird
That perched amid a spray of apple bloom
That gave, hard by, its fragrance to the winds,
We lay her softly in the ready grave.
Then all with brows uncovered silent stood,
As is our custom, till the priest should speak
Some word in tender memory of her,
The one we lay to rest.
The holy man
With lifted and illumined countenance,

As one who drinks an inward ravishment
Of all he outwardly beholds and hears,
Some moments silent stood, then said:
"I thought
Here at the grave to say some word of her;
Some word that spake our souls that knew her well,
But God—as if He had mistrusted I
Could do her justice,—takes the task himself!
Behold these azure skies that bend above,
Sweet as her laughing eyes love-lit in life!
Behold these fields and hills outrolling, clad
In velvet sheen of tender vernal blades,
And sown of daisies white, or gold, that crowd
The very brink of this her waiting grave!
Aye, listen and behold yon mocking bird
Perched in a bended spray of apple bloom!—
Through each and all of these God speaks of her:
The music of her laughter and her speech,
And joyance of her heart are typified
By this sweet bird whose song the angels taught;
Her purity of soul and grace of form,
And loveliness of face, find fitting type
In yonder spray of apple blossom, kist
Of vernal suns and washed in winds of May!

"I will not follow God's by human speech,
But will withhold the word I had to say,
So far it falls below what God here saith
Who knew her better and so loved her best!
And as for us, who are of her bereft,
Why should we weep what God so smiles upon?

Let's dry our tears and here above her grave
But make this prayer which none may make too oft:
"God, make us worthy of thy love as she
Was worthy it; and when this life finds close,
Then take us whither thou hast taken her,
Since there, if anywhere, be blessedness!"

IF KINDLY WORDS THOU HAST FOR ME.

If kindly words thou hast for me,
  Let now such words be said;
Wait not until they make my grave
  Then speak them o'er my head.

If floral gifts thou hast for me,
  In life these gifts bestow;
Wait not my death that thou with these
  The sod above may strow.

Yea, yea; if there be love for me,
  Then bid I ye who love me,
Smooth now life's path, keep not your love
  To smooth the sod above me!

Thy gentle words death will not heed,
  Nor heed thy love nor flowers;
Leave thou to God death's endless years,
  Bless thou life's fleeting hours!

MIDWINTER.

I.

Beneath a cloudy sky of ashen gray,
Brown hill and vale in silence roll away;
A forest, gray and leafless, stands unstirred
By moving wind or note or wing of bird.
A river, wound through all, in silence lies,
And mirrors in its breast the leaden skies
And hanging cliffs and naked boughs that lie
As if a-float betwixt a sky and sky.
On hill and vale nor flocks nor herds are seen;
No soaring bird flies earth and sky between;
But earth and air and sky one stillness keeps,
As chill and solemn as the breath that creeps
Through marble cells where dust sepulchral sleeps!

II.

Thus lay dead earth, to wait her shroud of snow
Which soon down floated, solemnly and slow,—
Soft flake on flake from out the dim profound,
Noiseless of flight and lighting without sound;
Ah, softly, sadly as the winged tread
Of angels 'round the slumber of the dead!
Skies grew more dark, the windless air more dim
With flakes, till gazed the eye as through a film;
Thus on till noon, then on till close of day,
When ceased the snow and rolled the cloud away;
Then burned the faded sunset's tender light,

And night in silence from her starry height
Gazed on dead earth enwrapped in spotless white!

III.

Anon, an owl—from out dark cedarn boughs,
That made through silent day his shadowy house—
Passed as might pass a shadow or a dream,
And noiseless bore o'er hill and vale and stream
To where a branchless trunk did lift on high
An ebon shaft against the moonlit sky,
And on its topmost wasting crag did light:
There lonely as the spirit of the night,
He sat within the moon's soft, sadful glow,
His shadow cast upon dead earth below
Asleep within her stainless shroud of snow!

THESE ARE SEPTEMBER DAYS.

I.

In meadow lands is hushed the hum of bee;
The yellow leaf among the green we see;
Now leaves down flutter when the wind blows free,
Bestrewing wood-land ways;
The quarreling woodpecker, the noisy jay,
Alone in forests heard; the happy lay
Of songful birds a thing of yesterday—
These are September days.

II.

The zephyr shakes the petals from the rose,
The thistle-down across the meadow blows,

The butterfly falls stricken, the sun glows
As by reflected rays;
The roving winds no breath of blossom bring,
The skies are void and dumb; no glancing wing
Of swallow there, no merry twittering—
These are September days

III.

The night falls sooner, colder lies the dew,
The blue sky bendeth with a paler blue,
Softer, vaguer, sleeps the distant view,
Enwrapped in sadful haze;
The dust lies heavy on the wayside weed;
Where blossoms were, now in their stead are seed,
On which the songless birds in quiet feed—
These are September days.

IV.

The cobwebs blow and glisten in the sun,
The dew-drop gleams till half the day is done,
The creeper like a tongue of flame doth run
And spreads a fiery maze;
The caterpillar buildeth its own tomb,
The golden rod lifts its auriferous plume—
The last of flowers ere comes winter's gloom—
These are September days.

V.

A sense prophetic over all doth brood,
A subtle loneliness, a solitude
Pervadeth hill and valley, stream and wood,
Sunlit and shadowed ways;

The false seems falser and the true more true,
More sad and thoughtful we our lot pursue,
With deeper yearning gaze to yonder blue,
In these September days!

WOULD YOU WAKE HIM?

Weeping over him you stand:
Yet, what know you of his fate?
Lo, the deed of God you mourn!
Death, as life, of God was planned;
And He plans in love, not hate;
Love far wiser than thine own!

Would you wake him if you could?
He, who lies a-slumber so;
Folded hands upon his breast;
With a countenance endued,
With such peace as seems to flow
From the source of endless rest!

Would you wake him from such sleep?
To be tossed 'twixt hopes and fears;
Joy pursuing, grief pursued!
Wake him but again to weep
Here life's sweet and bitter tears!—
Would you wake him if you could?

Would you pluck him from death's hand,
Seeking by such deed to prove

Mortal's love than God's more great?
Patience; you shall understand
How such act of blinded love
Had been crueler than hate!

DAWN.

As some dark, songless bird—mistaking sleep
For death—on ebon wings of ample sweep,
Drops shadow-like from out the skyey deep,
Upon the bosom of a slumberer,
Then, startled, flies to see the sleeper stir;

So when the Dawn swift arrows shot ahead,
That 'long the East a golden splendor shed,
Did brooding Night her shadow pinions spread,
And from the earth, that but a-slumber lay,
Affrighted rose, and darkly bore away!

SHE MAY GO FORTH.

She may go forth; I cannot lose her now,
For we have loved as none can love and cease;
Loved with such love as melteth by its glow
Two hearts in one, henceforth to beat in peace—

A peace there is no jealousy may break,
No doubt disturb; the peace of perfect love!
That may not be forsaken nor forsake,
And only leaveth earth to go above.

Her presence sweet doth e'er about me seem
As that of God, beyond whose rapt confines
I can not wander, nor in thought nor dream,
Nor yet may feel that any fetter binds.

Though she doth walk her now in distant lands,
And come between us continent and sea,
I can not doubt but what she understands
The thought I think, and saith "he loveth me!"

What if, 'mid fashion, station, wealth and pride,
This night she mingles in some festive hall,
Where loving glances come from every side,
And tender words do seek her to enthrall?

Oh, thou who drink'st from her glance a bliss,
Misdeemest thou such means her love is thine!
Ah, dupe, fond dupe, welcome art thou to this,
Her glance is yours, but her thoughts are mine!

Oh, thou, who claspest in the dance her hand,
(Whose lightest touch a rapture doth impart.)
I would not 'twixt thee and thy joy stand—
Her hand thou holdest, but I hold her heart!

SUMMER'S GRAVE.

In September, summer pined,
But so gentle was her pining.
Unto it we were resigned,
Nor could deem her life resigning.
For she seemed still light of heart,
And her cheeks as fair were seeming;
Save more oft she sat apart,
As of something she were dreaming.

In October, she lay dead;
Yet so fair, in death though lying,
Such a glory death had shed,
We gaze on her without sighing;
Such sweet light her temples steep,
Such a rapture seemed to hover,
That we said, she doth but sleep,
Raptly dreaming of her lover!

In November—what is this?
'Tis the grave where summer's sleeping;
Over which in bitterness,
Winds are sighing, clouds are weeping!

Ah, a newly covered grave,
  Of all things on earth most lonely,
Where no grass nor flowers wave,
  And the icy worm crawls only!

WHICH IS MORE REAL?

A peasant slept at the palace gate,
  And dreamt he were the king:
Upon a throne he sits in state,
And lords and ladies on him wait,
  And bards his glory sing.

Broad realms are his and wealth untold,
  And life or death, his nod;
And purple fine his limbs enfold,
His jeweled hands clasp cups of gold,
  His wines might tempt a god.

So past the night. The peasant woke
  Beneath the morning beam;
He rose, the dew fell from his cloak,
But no regretful word he spoke
  To find it all a dream.

"Ah, king, thy lot and mine are one!"—
  Thus blithely did he sing—
"In sleep thou lose, I gain a throne;
Thou king till night, I king till morn,
  Then who is more a king?

"Thy throne dissolves in luna's ray,
Mine melts in morning's beam!
Whose throne's more real, tell me pray?
Yea, which more real, who can say,
Reality or dream?"

IN SEPTEMBER'S WOODS.

I.

The mirth of summer is subdued;
Stands nature as in thoughtful mood;
The lights and shadows at my feet
Lie pensively, or part and meet
As fitfully soft winds that come
And go disport the boughs above
With murmurs soft as sighs of love,
Then leaves them motionless and dumb.
Throughout the forest is not heard
One full and happy song of bird;
But, ever and anon, I hear
Some note as of regret or fear—
Some broken song, more like the call
For some lost mate—and this is all.

II.

From 'mong the green some leaf of brown,
Or here or yonder flutters down,
To lodge 'mong tangled grass and weed,
Where burr and pod and feathered seed

And bleaching blade and blighting stem,
Replace the gentle, starry smile
Of flowers that did here, erstwhile,
The forest's floor with beauty gem.
On languid wing a butterfly,
All blurred and tattered, floateth by—
It seeks no flower, seeks no mate,
But blindly led by blinder fate,
It feebly flutters, soon to fall
Like falling leaf—and this is all.

III.

Here where, through days of summer glad,
Each blooming weed its singer had—
Here where a fuller sunlight falls
Between the trees, a cricket calls—
An only singer, whose refrain
Wakes none to answer it again.
On yon huge tree, that lifts and lies
A storm-bleached crag against the skies,
A crow alights and, without sound,
Surveys the pensive scene around.
From yonder withered trunk that gleams
White through the greener trees, and seems
Almost to totter to its fall,
A wood-peck' drums—and this is all.

IV.

The woodland pool lies chill and clear;
No merry piping frog is there;
Late fallen leaves upon it lie
As calmly as its mirrored sky;

The water-grass and water-weed
Strew on its surface winged seed;
  Upon its mirrored water dies
The dragon-fly—its gilded wing
A-glitter like some jeweled thing.
  The falling lily rotting lies
Beneath its shadowed waters dim;
Some songless birds run 'round its rim—
Some songless birds that cluck and call
And dodge and duck—and that is all.

O, YELLOW LEAF AND RED.

I.

In the leafy months of summer 'neath this patriarchal tree,
Many times I've hung my hammock here to rock in revery;
While the leaves made dreamful murmur by the fragrant winds caressed,
And in varied notes above me, bird to bird its love confessed.
And anon through wind-stirred leafage flashed the gleam of sunny skies,
Which unto my dreamful vision seemed the glance of azure eyes;
And out yonder lay the meadow with its happy bees a-hum,
Where like winged blossoms floated butterflies from bloom to bloom!

What delight to swing my hammock then beneath this
spreading tree
And while fragrant zephyrs rocked me, lose my soul in
revery!
Ah, the hours flower-footed, music pinioned, onward
fled,
Oh, so sweetly and so swiftly, that they touched not
heart nor head,
Nor did leave me older, sadder, when the day behind
me sped!

II.

Ah, how different is the vision that this morning greets
mine eyes!
Ah, how different the emotions that within my soul
arise!
Lies out yonder now the meadow sad and silent as the
tomb,
Where pale grasses sigh and whisper in the winds that
go and come;
Flits no butterfly about it, hums no bee, no swallow
flies
On sweet, joyous wings above it through the sadful,
vacant skies.
Happy notes of birds I hear not, hear no sound except
the wind,
Like a soul that wanders, seeking, but is doomed to
never find—
Naught but winds I hear and subtle murmur as of gen-
tle rain,
Come of flying leaves and falling, brightly strewing
hill and plain.

Ah, bright flying leaves and falling, sorrow with thy
light is shed!
Gently fall ye on my shoulder, in my lap and on my
head,
But ye fall upon my heart as well, O yellow leaf and
red!

TWO BIRDS.

I see two birds this lovely April weather:
Two, newly wed;
I watch them build their cozy nest together,
Above my head.

Amid a spray of apple bloom they build,
By zephyrs swung;
The happy pauses of their work are filled
With raptest song.

A straw they bring and place, then pause and sing
For heart's delight;
Then side by side once more on buoyant wing
Take joyous flight.

Ah, here 'neath azure skies in April weather,
Mid blossomed trees,
Where whisper of soft winds is heard together
With hum of bees;

Oh, what two spirits heavenly walks among
Can be more blest
Than these two birds, pouring their souls in song,
Building their nest?

O happy, happy birds, I am no less
Mad with delight!
Behold this rose I wear; she gave me this
Last night, last night!

She, who is fairer than all roses are,
Or stars that be,
Took this from near her heart 'neath light of star
And gave it me!

'Twas in a garden we together walked;
Stars shone above:
She leaned upon my arm; we strolled and talked,
But not of love.

Yet love was there! Oh, her soul within mine own
I felt to blend!
And I was glad as they to whom are known
Joy without end!

Her presence was as God's; the universe
Breathed ecstacy;
No longer possible seemed any curse,
Or blight to me.

The globe beneath our feet, the starry dome,
All nature fair,
Seemed fashioned by God's hand to be the home
Of but one pair!

Oh, happy, happy birds! I am no less
Mad of delight!
Behold this rose I wear; she gave me this
Last night, last night!

And yet, O birds, I hope a day ere long
Even more blest,
When we as ye may pour our souls in song,
Building our nest!

THE RENEGADE.

Afar in woodlands dim
A grave they made,
And rudely buried him,
The renegade.

Where fell he, shot at last,
A grave they dug,
And buried like a beast,
The soulless thug!

They raised at foot nor head
No stick or stone;
No sod above was spread,
No flower strown.

The tears of none had he,
The love of none;
His mother, even she,
Disclaimed her son!

No prayer was said nor thought
For him beneath;
But thanks to those who brought
Him to his death.

O'er him the woodland loam
They rudely prest,
And left him, turning home
With mockful jest.

But scarce their voices died,
As they withdrew,
When soft a zephyr sighed
The branches through,

And shaken blossoms dropt
From boughs a-wave,
And with their beauty topt
That hated grave.

Above it birds of song
Flashed wing on wing,
And like angelic throng,
Sat quiring.

Sweet flecks of azure skies,
Through leaves above,
Glanced down like angel eyes
With looks of love.

Gray shadows of the wood
Crept one by one,
And knelt by it, or stood,
Like hooded nun.

On it flashed sunny shaft
And rested there,
And pointed back to God—
A golden-stair!

WHO IS RIGHT?

Ah, how may man his brother fight,
  Each deeming his the righteous cause?
Each feeling he alone is right?
  Hath truth and justice no fixed laws?
Each feels that he a martyr dies,
  Slain by the hand of virtue's foe;
Each, dying, lifts to God his eyes
  And smiles beneath the fatal blow.

"It is for righteousness I die;
  For truth and justice am I slain;
Ah, such a death is victory
  For such is but to live again!"
Both die sustained of faith sincere;
  Both feel eternal life is given;
Though what one deemed to hell should bear,
  The other deemed should bear to heaven.

Wilt thou accept them both, O God?
  Have both alike for justice died?
Doth neither need thy chast'ning rod?
  Both worthy with thee to abide?
Yea, yea! true mercy asks that we
  But do sincerely what we do;
For 'tis as just as man can be,
  To his convictions being true.

A PASTEL.

Within a forest deep one August eve
I museful sat upon a mossy log.
There was no bird at song nor wind astir,
But brooding restfulness as sweet as sleep
Embathed the woodland scene. About me slept
Unbroken shadows dense; one flower wild,
A single blossom, fragile, sweet and fair,
Here smiled alone amid these silent shades.
Its beauty smote me with a soft delight,
Its loneliness emotions in me stirred
Of tender pathos. Musefully I said:

"What loneliness is thine all day to brood
Amid the mighty shadows of these trees!
Where thy companions all? Why was it thine,
When they departed, yet to linger here?
Yet, shadowed as thou art, sweet optimist,
There is some hope that luminates thy soul
And shineth in thine upward lifted face!"

Thus so I mused, when through some crevice in
The emerald, leafy dome, a sunbeam fell,
And in a circlet sweet of golden light,
As by design, this little flower framed!
Beholding this my soul was smote with sweet
Emotions of a tender awe. Somewhile
I silent sat in mystic fancy wrapt,
Then said:

"No sunbeam this! That flower prays,
And this the golden pathway of her prayer
From out these shadows soaring up to God!"

And then as if to prove my fancy true,
These words had scarcely fallen from my lips
When, lo! from out the azure deep of skies,
A butterfly as fair as winged love,
Dropt through the leafy dome, as following
The golden pathway of that sunny beam:
And—lightly as a petal of the rose
Descendeth through the languid airs of June—
Down floated, nestling it deliciously
Within the bosom of that flower sweet,
Where, with bright wings adroop and motionless,
As blossom on a blossom rested it!

So might twin souls that for each other long
And ardently had yearned, now met at last
Beyond the realm of Time, a rapture know
That silent is for its infinity!

The sunbeam past, its mission being done;
Deep silence reigned without a leaflet's stir;
And emerald shadows soft and sweet as were
In dream the presence of the one we love,
Embathed unbrokenly the sylvan scene.

ONE SUMMER DAY.

Within the city of the dead
  One summer day I spent alone;
  I strolled, and read the lettered stone,
Or lounged where cyprian shadows spread.

'Mong costly marbles, white or gray,
  I thoughtful stood, or slowly trod
  The pebbled walk through shaven sod
As musing fancy led my way.

Against the leaning shaft I leant,
  Or stretched upon some mossy tomb
  Where cooly slept the cedarn gloom—
And so the summer day was spent.

And what did I or see or hear
  While in the city of the dead?
  No sight to waken fear or dread;
No sound but sweetly smote mine ear.

I saw a blue sky bent above;
  I saw a tomb-flecked sward beneath;
  I saw a rose a tomb enwreath
And clasp it as with arms of love.

I saw the she-bird sit her nest
  With brooding wing and tender eye,
  While on a marble shaft hard by
The he-bird sat and sang his best.

I saw the sleeping light and shade:
  I heard the drowsful hum of bees
  Blend sweetly with the purring breeze
That dreamfully the leafage swayed.

I saw the gladful butterflies,
  From blooming grave to blooming grave,
  Blown as on undulating wave
Of ecstacy, 'neath sunlit skies.

I saw no ghost; no ghost I heard;
  But sweetest peace o'er all was spread;
  No sleeper stirred within his bed,
Nor sighed nor whispered any word.

Yea, saw a green, grave billowed sward;
  Saw bended azure skies above;
  Saw beauty, joy, peace and love
Lay like a mantle dropt of God!

SONNET.

How restfully we meet the close of day—
  Its soft'ning sounds, its gently gathered gloom
  That veils earth's flowers to bid others bloom
Above and smile with sweetly soothing ray!
How trustfully we turn from light away
  To meet dusk's soundless flood that floweth from
  Lethean Night, the soul to overcome
With peace that leaves no wish nor need to pray!

O Thou, who art as merciful as just,
When death draws near, give to my soul such peace
As then I know when evening cometh on!
And to Death's arms as sweetly let me trust
As now I trust to starry night's embrace
That soothing folds and keeps me till the morn!

TO A FLOWER.

O bright and dainty flower,
A-nod in vernal air!
Thou child of passing hour,
So fragile, sweet and fair!

Here like some fairy dreaming,
Asleep on emerald sod!
Or like some jewel gleaming,
Dropt from the hand of God!

The green earth spreads around thee,
And blue skies bend above;
The butterflies have found thee,
And give thee love for love!

The sunbeams glad caress thee,
And gold before thee fling;
The soft winds kiss and kiss thee,
And fan with cupid wing!

The grass, like knights in armor,
Lift round thee lance on lance,
As if to say: "Dare harm her,
And die for thy offense!"

The birds around, above thee,
  Do woo thee with sweet song;
The brown bees love and love thee,
  And naught would do thee wrong!

Ah, bright and dainty flower,
  A-nod in vernal air;
Thou child of passing hour,
  So fragile, sweet and fair!

How free from care and strife is
  The path where leads thy feet!—
Though brief and brief thy life is,
  How full, how fair, how sweet!

No yesterday, no morrow,
  Disturbs thy sweet today;
Thou hast no need to borrow
  Of hope, nor memory!

Thou wakest—dawn is glowing;
  Thou sleep'st ere evening's gray;
Ah, live and die unknowing
  That night must follow day!

Of loves and sorrows riven,
  Our lives through years may creep;
Thine is a breath of heaven,
  Betwixt a sleep and sleep!

But through thy life a day is
  While ours are many days,
The prayer for us to pray is,
  'Tis thine to offer praise!

For Time, he hath no power
To measure happiness!—
An eon and an hour
Are one, in perfect bliss!

WHEN DO I THINK OF THEE?

When do I think of thee?
At even's holy hour, when the day,
In dying, turns his face, as man, above,
And heaven kindling with a golden ray
Seems beck'ning him with sweetest looks of love!—
When earth stands hushed as if with rev'rence dumb,
And shines one star, as if a censer swung
By hands of heaven o'er some sainted tomb,
Where gathers dusk the far, dim hills along!—
'Tis then I look to eve's one star and sigh:
"Ah, beautiful as yon sweet star is she,
And deep my love as yon unfathomed sky!"—
Oh, then I think of thee!

When do I think of thee?
When stars dissolve before effulgent dawn,
And every bird wakes with its blithest lay;
When leaf and bloom are fairest, and each thorn
Is pendant with a dewy star whose ray
Through golden glory shoots a silver beam;
When blended light and song and loveliness
Imbathe the earth in one unbroken stream
Of ecstasy, as sweet as heaven's kiss!—

'Tis then I find such outward beauty vain
To hold my thoughts, which inward turn to see
The face that lit my dream, which morn had slain!—
Oh, then I think of thee!

When do I think of thee?
When in the silence of the midmost night
I lie awake while all the world sleeps on,
And silent stars set in the infinite
Seem not more hushed than earth they gaze upon;
When one a-listen, nothing hears, nor hears
The voice of silence, or that mystic sound
Which is the subtle singing of the spheres
In their concordant and eternal round!—
'Tis then I'm left with my own soul alone
And thoughts of one more dear than all to me,
Ah, thoughts that turn the night into the morn!—
Oh, then I think of thee!

THE DOUBTER.

The doubter of to-day you cry against,
As one who soweth evil in his path
And madly flyeth in the face of God!—
Then turn you thus in praise of present times:
"How much enlightened we in Church and State,
Compared with they three hundred years ago,
Whose kings were tyrants by a right divine;
Who, blind of ignorance, called darkness light;
Whose creeds with superstition were accursed;

Who, in the holy name of Christ, our Lord,
In dungeons chained earth's nobler souls, or burned
Them at the stake, because they dared to doubt
That reason was, forsooth, a gift from hell!"

And who was he, three hundred years ago,
Whose heresy brought death upon himself,
Yet broke the darkness of the world, that you
Who follow him may better see to walk?
Yea, who was he, three hundred years ago,
Who died in dungeon or beside the stake,
That you to-day might boast enlightenment?
That you might live for that for which he died?
The brother of the doubter of to-day!
Yea, even he who now you cry against,
As one who soweth evil in his path,
And madly flyeth in the face of God!—

Then has this heretic become a curse,
Who did in days agone such work benign?
This doubter, is to-day his mission done?
His mission which, in years afore, has been
To lift and lead to high and higher things?
No! when the progress of the world finds end;
When Church and State in full perfection stand;
When man may be no wiser nor more free!—
Then shall the mission of the doubter end;
Then shall the heretic, his mission gone,
Pass with it, but—be thankful!—not till then!

NIGHT.

A day of azure skies a-flood with light,
Is sure a sweet and lovely thing to see;
It thrills the soul and gladdens it as wine,
Or as the magic of fair woman's face,
And sets the heart to bird-like caroling;
Yet, Night, I love thee with a deeper love!

Ah, when the sun, as in a robe of song
And glory wrapt, hath marched from east to west
O'er azure paven ways, meet path of gods,
Then slow descends with solemn majesty,
And leaves awhile a sequent trail of gold
That silently illumes the western skies,
Then fadeth into gray—oh, then, my Night!

Ah, beautiful, sublime, unspeakable!
Not all for slumber God created thee!
Thy ebon vault, star-sown and silent, bends
And broods on high, an awful holiness!
Like some great grief faith-litten, art thou, Night;
So sweetly sad, so darkly glorious,
Awaking tears more sweet and deep than joy!

'Tis when beneath the starry dome alone
That man most feels his immortality;
Most feels his awful kinship to the gods!
The mistic aura of religion flows
Most palpably beneath thy brooding wings!
Thou art some holy fane, some rendezvous
Divine, wherein, the soul resorting, feels
Most potently the presence of the gods!

MARCH.

With all thy rudeness, March, and moods austere,
  Thou hast a heart of tenderness and love:
'Tis outward only that thou dost appear
  Proof 'gainst enchantments that all others move.

Thou art a masker—this the birds do know—
  And when thou dost stern winter's garb assume,
And scowl and storm and shake down sleet and snow,
  The birds still sing on through thy borrowed gloom.

And inwardly 'tis plain thy heart is glad,
  To see thy frown thus taken at its worth;
And all thy blow and blustering most mad,
  Mocked by the birds in unabated mirth.

Ay, on some hill-side sloping to the south,
  Have we not caught thee often unaware,
With mask laid off and bending with warm mouth,
  Forth wooing tender blade and flower fair?

And we have seen thee, in some stormful mood,
  Shake down the snow flakes from thy streaming hair,
Which on some violet in leafless wood
  Fell, while she gazed with look of trustful fear;

When thou hast turned, abating thy fierce storm,
  Stung by her beauty thou could'st not defy,
And bending with a smile, and lips love warm,
  Hast kiss'd thy snowflake from her azure eye.

And when surprised thus in some tender mood,
That gave the promptings of thy heart full way,
As though half angered that we did intrude,
And half ashamed at softer passion's sway,

Then would'st thou turn with ten-fold darker frown,
Stamp out each sunbeam, shroud the azure sky,
And shake the wood as if to shake it down,
And tramp calm waters into mutiny.

Thou art thy sister April's match complete;
As much alike as boy and girl may be;
Her frowns are briefer and her smile more sweet,
Her moods are thine, save milder in degree.

Such art thou, March, capricious, wayward boy,
Offending but to wipe offense away;
For if we frown thou wilt our frown destroy
With smile that 'minds us of thy sister May.

KNOWLEDGE AND DEATH.

Not all the knowledge man hath yet achieved
Hath taught him any better how to die;
The awfulness and mystery of death
To-day confronts him as appallingly
As in the days he now looks back upon,
Dim in the dawn of human history.

The savage and the civilized alike
Stand equal brought before the door of death,

Where all, stript to the soul, must enter in.
No knowledge boots us there; nor anything
Acquired or acquirable in life,
Can there avail!—all these are nothing there!
Religion—which is common to all man,
The king and pesant, savage, civilized;
Born with the soul; the spirit's atmosphere!
A thing that never yet was lost nor found;
Nor is imparted, nor impartable;
Wisdom divine; the vision of the soul—
Religion! this alone avails us there!

Behold the chemist, the anatomist,
Geologist, astronomer; yea, yea,
See the adept in all the sciences,
Who analizes, weighs and mets and names
All elements in nature and in man;
Who proves us what is God and what is not,
What is the soul, and what is life and death,
And whence is man, and whither he shall go!—
Behold him with all knowledge of the past
And present crowned! a god in his conceit,
While full and buoyant life and health are his.

But when the shadow of approaching death
Doth fall upon him, then how false he finds
And vain are all acquirements of man,
In which he arrogantly clothes his soul!
How pitiful they seem!—no more now
Than are the weeds he decks his body in!
Savant and ignoramus equal stand;
The savage and the civilized alike,

Now naked to the soul, falls on his knees,
Or kneels within his soul, and so in prayer
Or uttered or unutterable, doth clutch
The skirts of God!—the one thing real now
And tangible in all the universe!

Ah, naught that man hath ever learned of man
Hath taught him any better how to die!
For that is wisdom God alone may teach,
And what He teaches one He teaches all,
None justly His peculiar favor boasts;
Nay, all God-spoken words were ever said
With lips as near the peasant's ear as king's:
As near the clown's as that of sage or seer!

AUGUST DAYS.

O August days, O August days!
How slumberous thy woodland ways,
How tranquilly thy rivers creep,
How calm thy hills and valleys sleep:
Wrapt in thy tender, dreamful haze!

The birds forego their wonted song
And sit contentedly among
The bowered leafiness and seem
As if, henceforth, life were a dream.

On languid wings the butterfly
On breeze as languid, drifteth by:
The bee, the only toiler, drones
From bloom to bloom in drowsy tones.

Upon the sleeping waters sleep
The lily; soft as shadows creep,
A thistle down with unwet feet
Walks on the water's mirrored sheet.

Anon some yellow leaf is seen
To flutter from among the green
And float to earth, or catch and cling
In silken web, and idly swing.

Anon the sleeping woods are stirred
By song of some cicada, heard
In stridulous crescendo rise,
Then slow diminish till it dies.

O'er meadow bloom and tasselled corn,
In slumb'rous light, a mist is blown
Of idle webs, that flow and run
And glisten in an idle sun.

The water's calm, unruffled breast
Holds mirrored yet a calm more blest—
A snowy cloud asleep that lies
Against the dreamful azure skies.

O August days of dreamful haze!
When lovely summer hears the praise:
"Well done!" of God, and taketh rest
Amid her blessing labors blest,
By stream and field and woodland ways!

WHAT WITH MINE EYES I SCANNED.

I once beheld a lovely tree
  Upon a gentle hill;
Among its leaves the winds made free.
  The songsters had their will.

Beneath its shadows cool and sweet,
  Came trysting youth and maid;
And labor paused from noon-day heat,
  And care-free childhood played.

For long and long it there had stood,
  Yet vigorous it seemed
As if each year it youth renewed,
  And n'er of death it dreamed.

But once upon a day in June,
  With sun at zenith height;
When leaf and blade did seem to swoon
  Beneath the sun's fierce light;

There rose from out the west a cloud
  That grew upon the sky,
Until at length it did enshroud
  The day's relentless eye.

Its shadow fell refreshingly,
  And gentle winds that blow
Before the rain, stirred plant and tree
  To whispers sweet and low.

Anon, deliciously the rain
  Among the leaves was heard,
And music made on grassy plain
  More sweet than song of bird.

The dust of weary drouthful days
  Was washed from leaf and blade;
On hill, in dale and woodland ways,
  Rejoicing was made.

Yet while the rain through leafy lips,
  Was quaffed of this fair tree;
And while from bole to branches' tips
  It thrilled deliciously;

From out a cloud that hung above,
  There shot a bolt of flame!—
A javelin from the hand of Jove
  Flung with unerring aim!

And lo! this tree from bole to bough,
  From rind to heart, was torn,
And on the grassy plain below
  Its bleeding limbs were strown!

The cloud from which the bolt did speed
  Put now aside its frown;
And as if guerdoned for the deed,
  Put on a rainbow crown!—

Me ask not why the cloud that dropt
  The blessing rain beneath,
Once in its blessed mission stopt
  To fling a bolt of deah!

Me ask not why this bolt was sent
  Upon so lovely head,—
A life as angel's innocent,
  A life as angel's glad!

I do but tell what did befall:
  What with mine eyes I scanned;
Yet good not evil will I call
  What none may understand!

PLIGHTED.

He long had loved her, long had known
  Her heart to him was given,—
To give our heart and feel we own
  Another's!—this is heaven!

Yet never he had sought to prove,
  By words, his love for her;
But Love hath speech his own, and Love
  Needs no interpreter.

When love the magic blending is
  Of two rapt souls, what need of speech
Love to proclame, or tell the bliss
  Known equally to each?

* * * *

'Twas in a woodland lawn they strolled,
  And near the close of day;
The lights and shadows manifold
  About there footsteps lay.

Anon they stood them side by side
  And watched the sun go down:
The day, how gloriously died!
  Crowned with what golden crown!

About his couch there burned such gold
  As scarcely might be borne
Of mortal eyes!—seemed backward rolled
  The skies to show God's throne!

The day now dead, his couch above,
  The evening star forth shone—
Day's soul enfranchised, winged of love
  And back to heaven borne!

They saw, as gathered twilight's gloom,
  Star after star unclose;
Then like a ghost, from earth, a tomb,
  The silent moon up rose.

They stood and watched these scenes sublime—
  Day's death and birth of night;
Their thoughts were one in perfect chime,
  There hearts, one in delight!

Her cheek, it was not far from his;
  There hearts were audible;
Their souls, fused in love's happiness,
  Were one, and knew one will.

Was it her wish and his as one
  Which he could not resist?
Be as it may, the act was done—
  Her cheek he softly kist!

She backward drew as one incensed;
The color left her cheek;
While from her depth of eyes there glanced
The thought she did not speak.

As one in whom two passions wrought
For mastery, stood she;
But ere she put in words her thought,
He made to her this plea:

"O sweet," he said, "pray frown not so!
Full half the fault is thine;
Thou know'st I love thee, and dost know
I know thy heart is mine!

"To kiss thee so I had not dared
Had I not known thy love;
Our souls are to each other bared
As to the gods above!"

Her eye-lids dropt, and in her face
The rose did now eclipse
The lily; her to his embrace
He caught, and lips met lips!

"Ah, sweet," he said, "thy lips let speak
What long my heart hath known—
The love thine eye and changeful cheek
So oft to me hath sworn!"

"No, no;" she said, "words can but dim
And make sweet love sound vain!"

Then lifting up her face to him,
They kist and kist again!

* * * *

Ah, Paradise is on earth yet!
Nor will it be removed
As long as God will kindly let
The lover be beloved!

GREATEST HAPPINESS.

'Tis not glory, 'tis not wealth;
Nor fame, its plaudits and its bays;
Nor power that a nation sways;
Nor yet the boon of perfect health;
Nay, nor righteousness; nor faith
God to see in life and death!

'Tis with passion limitless
One to worship, and to be
Loved in turn and equally!
'Tis to be the happiness
Of the one of all we love
Our own happiness above!

THE CHURCH AND SCIENCE.

"This is the truth!" so says the Church,
"Hate thou as sin all it denies:
'Tis truth too sacred for man's touch
Or mortal man to criticise!
Yea, yea, a truth God's self hath taught;
Then dare thou not to pick and pry,
Or turn it doubtingly about!—
Believe and live, or doubt and die!"

"This is the truth," so Science says,
"Though thou hast still the right to doubt;
Nay, turn on it all reason's rays,
And pry within and pry without!
And if it be not what I deem,
Show where in error's way I've trod;
But if thou find it what I claim,
Believe, though it deny thy God!"

HOPE AND MEMORY.

I stood to view the setting sun;
The clouds piled high and higher
About his throne, sublimely glowed,
Illumined by his fire
'Till unto mortals it might seem
An universe's pyre.

Then in the shadowed East while yet
  The West effulgent streamed,
Lo, saintly, silent, beautiful,
  Rose luna, pensive beamed,—
Like sorrow beautified of faith,
  So sweetly sad she seemed!

Fit type of Hope, thou flying sun
  With grand emblazonry!
Thou moon that follows in His wake,
  Fit type of Memory!—
One waking ever song and strife,
  One soothing silently!

Yea, fair is Hope, the day of life,
  E'er flying on before,
With light that floodeth land and sea
  And blue sky bending o'er;
Awaking song, awaking strife,
  As winds wake ocean's roar!

And sweet is Memory, life's night,
  That follows Hope, life's day—
Ah, starry, deep and beautiful,
  That holds her silent way
On which we gazing smile and weep
  Sweet tears we would not stay!

HAVE I A HEART?

Have I a heart? Ah, nay, ah, nay.
I once had one but have not now.—
I lost it, and e'er since that day,
I've lived without a heart, somehow.

We had a game, just twixt us two;
Our hearts were stakes; I lost, she won.—
Ah, won most easily, and so
She has two hearts and I have none!

I do not now regret my cost
Of gaming, nor regret the sin;
I grieve not for the heart I lost,
But for the heart I did not win!

Ah! had her luck but been my part,
I'd not have left her thus undone!—
Nay, I'd have given her my heart,
And only kept the heart I won.

OZNI.

He prayed the gods for power,
For wealth and fame and love;
The gods made kindly answer
From out their realms above.

And Ozni made thanksgiving;
Then said: "Ye gods, no more
I ask of ye, save only
That these, your gifts, endure!"

Few days had past, when Ozni
Again to sigh was heard,
While walking in his garden
Where sang the happy bird.

"What! art thou sighing, Ozni?"
The gods spake from above—
"To thee but now we granted
Wealth, power, fame, and love!"

"Ye did," he said, "but lacking
Is what is worth them all—
'Tis Happiness! a presence
That makes all beautiful!"

"But it was wealth and power,
Love, fame, thou would'st possess,"—
Replied the gods,—"thy prayer
Said naught of happiness!"

THEBES.

A waste of shifting sand,
Outrolling like a sea till kist the sky;
Alike on every hand
Forlone and silent, save for winds that sigh—
That wake and wail, and sob and sink and die.

E'er close upon your tread,
The lone winds follow and your tracks efface:
And seem as if they said:
'Ye are the quick, why seek ye this lone place?
Here walk the dead whose foot-falls leave no trace?"

A desert and a grave!
Yet once this land o'erflowed with fruit and song:
And millions fair and brave,
Here once have trod in busy, happy throng;
For here sprang Thebes, who with the world was young!

* * * * * *

Lo! tumbled, groveling walls;
A wilderness of roofless, columned stone:
Time wasted capitols;
An obelisk o'er-writ in tongues unknown—
And this is Thebes, who called the world her own!

What desolation now!
How lowly kneeleth now earth's once proud queen;
What ashes on her brow!
And lower still her stoop and humbler yet her mien,
Before her conqueror, Time, who sits above serene!

No habitation near;
But from horizon to horizon 'round,
Is thine this desert drear,
Ah, thine O Thebes! and sad-ful winds with sound
Of one in search of what may not be found:

Or like sad spirits scourged
For some dark sin thy stones alone might tell—
Now 'mong thy ruins urged,
Now out, by unseen lash, and left to dwell
Nowhere in peace, this blasted plain their hell!

* * * * * *

What mark this on the sand
Which desert winds have daily brought to sprinkle,
As with a spirit hand,
Here o'er these crumbling stones, with subtle tinkle
Of glinting grains, that in the sunlight twinkle?

What track is this we trace,
Past crumbling walls, o'er relics of a throne,
O'er shattered shrine and vase?—
Ah, 'tis a serpant's trail,—there it is shown,
Where sleeps the asp along a column prone!

Ah, no; molest him not!
This now is all his own; living, we spurn
Such vile worms from us, but
When we have perished they to us return
To revel in our clay or ashes of our urn.

Ah, no; molest him not!
We are intruders here upon his own;
To smite him in this spot,
Were lifting from the dead the coffin stone
To crush the worm that battens on a bone!

* * * * * *

The sun has set and night
With star and moon resumes her throne serene,

And floods with solemn light
These silent walls! So yon same moon was seen
O'er thee, O Thebes, when thou wast crowned earth's
queen!

Ah, then at day's sweet close,
And clomb as now yon moon the twilight skies,
What hum of pleasure rose!
How blent with song and dance thy lover sighs!
How brighter shone than stars thy maiden's eyes!

* * * * * *

What sound like falling feet
Among thy moon-lit columns?—soft and low,
On sands that pave thy street?—
The desert lion passing to and fro,
Nor that thou wert man-built doth ever know!

SEPTEMBER.

Now through the day
The wood-peck, crow and jay
The forests fill with sounds unmusical;
The songful bird
Is silent, or else heard
In boscage deep with only cluck and call.

Now pailer grow
The meadow's verdant glow
Where feathered seed of grasses drift and cling;

Now are the skies
Grown softer, like blue eyes
That love or sorrow shadows with its wing.

In forests deep
Now lights and shadows sleep
Yet silenter upon the forest floor;
Where blossoms were
Now needle, pod and bur,
Catch you and cling, where you walked free before.

One flower blooms
O'er many flowers' tombs
And nods in sighful winds—the Goldenrod!
Now dew of night
Clings longer 'fore the light,
And chillier it gleams on leaf and sod.

In forests now,
From 'mong the greener bough,
Anon some yellow leaf forsakes its stem;
Now crisp leaves curl
On waters still, and twirl
In silken web in woodland vistas dim.

On hill, in dell,
In field and wood, "Farewell!"
Is echoed and incribed on every hand;
All wheres you tread
Sad ghosts of fair things dead
Through sunny ways and shadowed steal and stand.

LINES TO LIBERTY.

Thou art, O Liberty! man's sense of right
And equity betwixen man and man!
Benignest spirit and most beautiful,
That condecends to show her face to man,
And through the magic of her loveliness
Awake in him the God, and breath through earth
A sense ennobling of diviner spheres!
Oh, draw thou ever closer to men's souls
Till all may see and know, and knowing love
Thee with a love profounder e'en than life!

As when a myriad-myriad drops of dew,
Pendant on leaf and blade in hill and dale,
Leap into flame at sweet Aurora's kiss,
And with responsive, interfusive beams,
Resplendant make the vernal face of earth,
So come thou closer to men's souls until
The radiance of thine immortal charms
Smite on all hearts, imbuing them of thee,
Till each to each responsively may glow,
And fill with glory all the peopled earth.

LET OTHERS SAY HOW MUCH THEY LOVE.

So bold I am not as to claim
  That language hath the power
To paint thy charms, or fitly name
  Thy many graces o'er.

Nay, they who claim such perfect speech
  Feel not as I thy beauty;
So, fondly deeming that they reach,
  Fall far below their duty;
Yea, ever than their words most rare
  Thy lovliness is rarer!
So when they say, "she is thus fair,"
  I answer, "she is fairer!"

The heart that findeth words to tell
  How much it loves and dearly,
May love or cease to love at will;
  May change its passion yearly.
Look upward to yon crown of night,
  Yon star-lit, azure heaven;
From out whose depts falls sweetest light
  But is no voice given!—
Such is Love's symbol! Who may prove
  By words those depths above thee?
Let others say how much they love,
  Let me but say, "I love thee!"

THE RIVER.

I.

From yon mount where I spring a babbling thing,
  Till end I in broad ocean wave,
I image man's life, its joy and strife,
  Betwixen the cradle and grave.

First laugh I for joy unknowing annoy;
  Like childhood of man I begin,
Where pure is my wave from its mountain cave
  As childhood unsullied of sin.
From rock unto rock I leap and the shock
  New-maddens my heart with joy;
Till the song that I sing goes echoing
  Like that of a wayward boy.
Now that way, now this my course may digress,
  Turned ever by trifles most light,—
So childhood is swayed by love or by dread,
  Of all in its fanciful sight.
Through sunshine and shade my pathway is laid,
  But shadows my wavelets scarce stain;
So quickly I dart the light in my heart
  Scarce fadeth ere lighted again—
So tears of a child through which it will smile
  Forgetting what caused them to start.
So light lies its grief, its staying so brief,
  Joy never will wholly depart.

II.

As nearer I flow to the broad plains below,
  More quiet my wave and more smooth,—
So glad childhood ends as sweetly it blends
  With happy, yet thoughtfuller, youth.
More broad and more deep now onward my sweep
  Than when higher the hills among,
But my wave it is bright and my song it is light
  As the heart is of youth and his song.
As onward I'm borne now oft am I torn
  By trees that my waves overthrow.

Or down some abyss my bright waters hiss
With maddening fury below!—
Then floats from beneath where mad waters seeth,
A vision transcending all art
In beauty!—So hope, ariseth to cope
Each sorrow of youth's strong heart!

III.

Now, stately and strong the broad plains along
I glide me with silenter sweep,—
Like manhood I am, which earnest and calm
Its onward direction will keep.
Though sunk is my flow to a voice now low
My calmer way nothing impedes—
So finding words weak men seldom speak,
Less living in words than in deeds.
Less limpid my flow as onward I go
Yet further and further o'er earth,—
So man's life must be of shadow less free
The further he wanders from birth.
Bright pebble and shell 'neath my waters that dwell
Now pass I in silence by;
No longer they break my wavelets and wake
My laughter so merrily,—
So manhood will lay those trifles away
Which charmed so his childish eye;
Bright toys which he. now chancing to see,
But marks with a whispered sigh.

IV.

More deep and more wide, more solemn I glide
As near I the ocean wave,—

So hushed and more slow, more solemn the flow
Of life as it neareth the grave!
The sea's distant tone so blends with mine own
I scarce know his song from my song,—
So with life near its end death's visions so blend
Life scarce knows to which they belong.
Now broad in my breast reflectedly rest
The image of heaven on high,—
So nearing life's close man finds more repose
In op'ning his soul to the sky!
In ocean I flow, then purer I grow,
Letting loose what of earth I may hold;
I climb sunny beams out of heaven that stream
Till I float in a cloudlet of gold,—
So claimeth the grave what earth to man gave
While wandered he under the sky,
Whilst his spirit divine which no grave may confine,
In purity mounteth on high.

MIDWINTER.

A sunless day; the air is calm and chill;
Beneath gray skies the brown earth lies asleep:
No dreamful vision to her slumbers creep
To light her sad, worn face; but cold and still,
She sleeps as one with whom death has his will!
Hushed nights and days sad march above her keep:
The ashen skies mute tears upon her weep;
But wakens hope nor fear her heart to thrill.

Above her slumber clings the empty nest,
And pod and burr are hung; and winged seed
And withered blade and leaf ride many ways
On random winds—dead things that find no rest
In death! unhappy ghosts that vainly plead
Of death the cup that sadful memory slays!

I LOVE THEE.

Ah, pages many might I fill
To paint in colors true
Thy charms, then find but vain my skill
To give such charms their due!

But lik'ning thee to each fair thing
Of earth or skies above thee,
Were but in varied words to sing
This one refrain: I love thee!

Away, then, with poetic phrase
Volumnious, to prove thee
Most fair, when every word of praise
Are in these words: I love thee!

THE PASSING OF SUMMER.

The sky is soft with hint of autumn haze;
In slumb'rous light lies hill and vale and wood;
A nameless pensiveness is felt to brood
Alike in shadowed nook and sunny ways;
Some subtle shade seems blending with the rays
E'en of the sun that leaves his light subdued.
Fair summer sits as in religious mood,
Bidding her birds forego their lighter lays;
A fallen leaf caught in her tresses lies,
And one before her floats upon the stream;
A thistle stalk that dying near her stands
Sheds winged seed that one by one uprise;
A dead cicada at her feet doth gleam;
An empty nest lies in her idle hands.

TO LIBERTY.

Adown the ages is thy pathway strewn
With graves of those who loved thee more than life!
For he who once hath met thee face to face,
And felt and seen thy magic loveliness,
No more may put thine image from his soul;
But as thy worshiper henceforth, he stands
Him ready at thy need to pour his life,
A glad libation, ever deeming it
An honor or to live or die for thee!

Ah, what art thou, O Spirit beautiful!
The radiance of whose immortal charms
Dost so illume the ways of life and death
That willingly man puts his hand in thine
And walketh through the grave unfearingly?
Thou art, O Liberty, companion meet
Of man's immortal soul! If for thy sake
He lightly holds this life, 'tis that he feels
The years eternal shall be thine and his!

YOUR HEART AND MINE.

Your heart is proof against all woman's wiles;
You scoff the magic of her glance or smiles;
Your heart, you boast, is ever in your breast,
Or goes or cometh at your head's behest.

Ah, as for me, no pretty girl I meet
But what my heart is straightway at her feet!
Ah, as for me, Dan Cupid and his dart
Are nature-born and not of poet's art!

Yet 'twixt my heart and yours mine would I choose;
I would not have an heart I could not lose!
Nay having lost no heart I would not boast it,
For no man finds his heart till he has lost it!

THE NIGHTINGALE.

I woke me in the middle of the night;
The house was silent, deep in slumber wrapt;
I silently arose, then as the soul
Forth stealeth of the body sunk in sleep
And wanders in a dream, so stole I forth,
And stood beneath the stars. Then musefully,
I took a path that led across the fields
And up a meadow hill that stood becrowned
Of one broad spreading tree, whose foliage dense
As seen against star-litten skies beyond,
Rose like some giant plume of ebon hue.

Anon I stood anear this spreading tree
Beneath the midnight skies. Up from the vale,
Where slept a tarn o'erhung of brooding mist,
The croak of frogs, a reptile choral song,
Discordant and disgustful, ceaseless rose;
A song uncanny as its singers are,
And fitly issuing of throats that quaff
Of ooze and slime in their obscene delight!

"Are these thy voices, then, O beastial Night?
Are these thy songsters, this reptilian throng,
As hateful to the ear as to the sight?"

Thus I exclaimed, but scarcely died my words,
When deep amid the foliage of that tree
That dark and slumberously stood beneath
The silent stars, a bird broke into song

That flowed and rippled mellowly and rapt!—
A songful incense lifted to the stars!
A deliquescent strain ethereal,
As if the silvery radiance of stars,
The opalescent gleam of dripping dews,
The lights and shadows of moon-litten groves
And swoonful sweetness of night-blooming flowers,
Were given voice and woven in one song!

I raptly listened till the song found pause,
Then said—ashamed of my too hasty scorn—
"Forgive me, Night, forgive! Oh, grant me, too,
This gift of song! touch, too, my lips, my soul
With Israfelian flame ineffable,
Till, heart aflame and palpitant of song,
I sing, unshamed by him, thy lyrist there,
Who melts his soul in strains that bid to bend
The list'ning stars on high, entranced to hear!"

FAUSTINA.

Fair Faustina, dost thou know
That I love thee?—love thee so,
Should'st thou give thy heart for mine
Life would be henceforth divine!
Loving and so loved of thee,
Such were my felicity,
Smooth should grow life's roughest road,
Light should grow life's greatest load;

All Decembers on life's way
Should seem blossomful as May;
All life's care to me should be
Light as sea-foam to the sea;
All the clouds of doubt and fear
'Fore hope's beams should disappear,
Or grow beautiful as grow
Clouds at dawn's effulgent glow,
Adding glory unto him
Whom their coming thought to dim!

Sweet Faustina, dost thou know
That I love thee?—love thee so,
Should'st thou give thy love for mine
Thou should'st make this life divine!
I would tread this earthly sod
Not as man, but as a god!
Such my buoyancy of soul,
Such my gloriousness of goal,
Fate should fawn my feet beneath,
Lovelier than life grow death,
Whilst, so loving, lived we here,
Growing fitter year by year
For supernal realms above,
Where thy loveliness and love
That could earth so sweetly bless,
Once in realms of joy's excess
And of charms divinely rare,
Should not seem less sweet nor fair!

Rare Faustina, dost thou know
That I love thee?—love thee so,

Should'st thou give thy heart for mine
Thou should'st make this life divine!
And when once in heaven's gate,
We should kneel us at His feet,
This the prayer I should express:
  Lo, our love! her loveliness!
Leave me these and naught beside
Ask I of what may abide
Here within all heaven's girth!
Leave them as they were on earth—
Not more perfect, not more pure,
Only will that they endure!
For since they beneath the skies
Made of earth a Paradise,
Here, if they be endless given,
I will ask no more of heaven!

TO SPAIN.

1898.

This is thy crime:
That thou did'st ever scorn the signs of Time!
Enlightenment and Liberty that go
Them hand in hand, twin angels here below,
Found locked against them both thine heart and mind!
Yea, to their voice and beauty, deaf and blind
Wert thou, who, with an alien ear and sight,
Deemed discord harmony and darkness light!—
This is thy crime!

This is thy folly:
Thou lookest back for all things wise and holy!
The Golden Age that in the morrow lies
For all who onward move and upward rise,
Thou deemest lies behind, and fain would see
The world turn back into the past with thee,
And armed with edicts of thy King and Pope,
Join hand to thine with destiny to cope!—
This is thy folly!

This is thy sin:
That thou hast sought through violence to win
Hearts to thy faith!—hast madly deemed that might
Could make of error truth, of wrong a right!
Anachronism, thou! thou should'st have past
When Mediaeval Night behind was cast,
And dawn illumed the world; but thou did'st stay,
Bat-winged and eyed, so to insult the day!—
This was thy sin!

This is thy fate:
A slayer of the slayer thee doth wait!
Within thine hands the fagot, sword and cross,
Used for unholy gain hath proved thy loss!
Upon the walls at thine unholy feast,
These words again and yet again were traced,
Misread of thee, or read but to defy:
"Who lives by violence by such shall die!"—
Accept thy fate!

THE FARCE OF LIFE.

Ah, mad, mad is the dance of life,
And fashioned for the sport of gods,
Who, lounging in their high abodes,
Look laughing on its farceful strife.

Yea, life's a motley masquerade,
Where none who comes is what he seems;
Where good and evil, truth and dreams,
Commingle in the mad parade.

Deceiving and deceived man goes:
Ay, masked himself, all things he meets
Are masked; so masker masker greets,
And all surmise and no one knows!

An evil in the lovely grace
Of good, man meets; her hand in his
He takes and bends, her lips to kiss,
When, lo! the mask falls from her face!

He meets a blessing in the grim
Disguise of woe; her doth he spurn,
And when too far for her return,
He sees her lift her mask to him!

He sees aloft the blossom, Hope;
He climbeth mountains steep and tall,
But reaching hand, Hope's petals fall,
And empty air his fingers grope!

The rose of Love enchants his eyes
  And blinds with loveliness; he scans
  No thorns, until in bleeding hands
He holds the swiftly fading prize!

He chases Fame through sleepless years;
  At last she deigns his brow to crown,
  And then the laurelled brow bends down,
Forgetting Fame in memory's tears!

Thus does he chase immagined good
  And clasp an evil in disguise!
  And thus deludedly he flies
The thing his heart has long pursued!

Chased of and chasing phantoms, he
  Takes thus his way across life's stage,—
  A madman, if to ceaseless wage
A strife with phantoms, madness be!

Ah, mad, mad is the dance of Life,
  And fashioned for the sport of gods,
  Who, lounging in their high abodes,
Look laughing on its farceful strife!—

Ay, loll in bowers of ease and quaff
  The nectar cup, and on the stage
  Where doth life's farceful fury rage,
Look down and hold their sides and laugh!

One day the gods will weary grow,
  And Death, who waits upon their frown,
  Straightway shall ring the curtain down
Upon the farce of life below!

Shall sweep the stage, turn out the lights—
  The sun and moon and stars—and then,
  The gods their pleasure seeking ken,
Will turn to fields of newer sights!—

Yea, sweep the stage of actors all,
  Ring down the curtain, and turn out
  The lights and lap the stage about
With Night's impenetrable pall!

Then earth, afar from light's abodes,—
  A toy of the gods cast by—
  In voiceless Night shall rotting lie,
No more remembered of the gods!

THOUGHTS OF HER.

Sweet the song of night's rapt bird,
  By love heard 'mid boughs of June
  Flooded by the mellow moon!
Sweet at eve o'er seas unstirred
  Steals a breath of blossom, borne
  From some isle in seas unknown!
Sweet are these, but sweeter far
  Are my thoughts that come and go
  Of a lassie whom I know,—
My heart's jewel! my life's star!

Sweet the break of dawn in June
  Over field and wood and stream,

Blithe of song, of dew agleam!
Sweet the winds that lift and swoon
'Round old gardens rose entwined,
And old fountains lily-lined!
Sweet are these, but sweeter far
Are my thoughts that come and go
Of a lassie whom I know,—
My heart's jewel! my life's star!

Sweet the laugh of pebbled stream
Lily-kist along its way,
Petal-strewn from boughs of May!
Sweet the music heard in dream
Which, once heard, no lips repeat
Nor find words to say how sweet!
Sweet are these, but sweeter far
Are my thoughts that come and go
Of a lassie whom I know,—
My heart's jewel! my life's star!

Sweet, ah, sweet the mingled breath
Of the blossoms, Love and Hope,
When within the heart they ope
Side by side! so sweet that death
Wakes no thought of bitterness,
But as life seems made to bless!
Thus so sweet my musings are,
Thoughts that raptly come and go
Of a lassie whom I know,—
My heart's jewel! my life's star!

DAY-SPRING.

I.

The rose of dawn
Slow bourgeoning,
With beauty charms
The eastern skies.

II.

As evil things
That hate and fear
The steps of God,
The shades of night
Make dark the West,
Swift flying the
Divine approach
Of gentle light.

III.

The glad, sad stars,
That silverly
Have flecked the dome
Of silent night,
Dissolve and pass,
As flakes of snow
That fall upon
The azure fields
Of sleeping seas.

IV.

Agleam with dews,
The fields and hills

And woodlands lie
Mute—rapt beneath
The spell of sweet
Expectancy.

V.

When, lo! a bird,
'Mid foliage dense
And dewy, hid,
Breaks into song—
The first sweet voice
To hail the dawn—
A note how glad,
How sweet and blithe,
Soul-pure and rapt!

VI.

Sweet mother earth—
How mute she lies
And glad, content
To hear this voice
That speaks her soul—
Hails God for her!
This first, sweet voice
Arising from
Her dewy breast!
This orison
That lifts her soul
Glad up to God;
Telling her love,
Telling her joy,
Her thankfulness,

While mute she lies
For ecstacy
Beneath the glad,
Sweet feet of Dawn!

'TWAS NIGHT.

'Twas night; the room was dimly lit;
A dying lover therein lay;
A maiden weeping near him sat
And strove with fervent prayer to stay
Death's lifted stroke. Death can not hear,
Else he had harkened to her prayer!

And when she saw was vain her prayer;
Saw death resolved to take his own,
She cried in tones of wild dispair:
"O God! by word or sign make known
That we again beyond life's sphere
Shall meet, and know and love, as here!"

Then through the dimly lighted room
A beam intenser flashed and fell
Upon the dying face! then from
The room it passed. Words may not tell
What awe and rapture through her swept!
She fell upon her face and wept.

Then gaining speech she kneeling said:
"I thank thee, thank thee, God, for this

That my great grief hath comforted!
  That all my days, till death, shall bless,
And with hope's light and love's illume
And lead my footsteps through the tomb!"

One passing with a lamp had paused,
  Stopt by the cry within of woe;
And this it was I saw which caused
  The light she deemed of God to flow!—
Through parted blinds I saw him stand
Who held the lantern in his hand.

Nay, by the lantern's light he bore
  The passer-by I recognized
As there he paused,—a man who wore
  A face that fitly advertised
His following,—'twas Jerry Brown,
Who kept the grog shop of the town.

The light had flashed on wall, on me,
  Ere fell it on that dying face,
But she who sorrowed there could see
  But what might in those features pass
Which she bent o'er. The eyes must dwell
Where dwells the heart, when possible.

I never yet have told her,—no,
  Nor shall I tell her that the light
She raptly deemed of God to flow,
  Chanced of a lantern in the night,—

A lantern borne by Jerry Brown
Who kept the grog-shop of the town!

* * * * * *

And yet, and yet—was it mere chance,
That from this lantern, then and there,
A beam upon that face should glance
As if in answer to her prayer?
May not mere accidents—as seen
Of man—God's love and wisdom screen?

Yea, if of God we find us here,
Then all doth to us appertain,
Or on our destiny may bear,
Is willed of God, and not in vain!—
There is no accident, but all
From out the hand of God must fall!

THE SERENADER.

(IN FLORENCE.)

He laid awake till all the town grew still,
And in each window every twinkling light
Was quenched, and earth seemed silent as the stars.
Then he arose and took his zither up,
And stept him forth into the silent street:
The stars and he alone did seem awake.
His heart then leading, followed on his feet,—
Passed mansion and passed cottage on his way:
Now here a cottage, like a jewel set

Within its plot of sod, mid native vine
And shrub and flower. Next, a mansion stood
Mid spacious yard with rare exotics set,
And marble nymph and god and splashing fount.
And marble hippogriff on either side
Its lofty and palatial portico.
Yea, on passed mansion and passed cottage, on
Passed many a door and lattice closed and barred
And silent with their slumberers within,—
On as his heart led, till he stood beneath
Her lattice, rose enwreathed!
A nightingale
Sang in the trees hard by most tenderly;
But when his zither took he forth and touched,—
The zither, that rare instrument whose tones
Most tender are, most subtle and most sweet,
And fittest for the voicement of love's soul;
And near the sleeper played, unwaking him,
Its subtle tones may steal into his soul
And be a dream to sweeten all his sleep,—
Yea, when his zither took he forth and touched,
The nightingale grew still, content to hear!
And pouring thus some while through finger tips
His soul upon that sweetest instrument,
He joined next his voice in rapt accord,
With low, soft tender tones, as some sweet bird
At noon of night, amid moon-litten boughs
Breaks into song that seems love's revery,
Made vocal for his own rapt soul to hear:

SONG.

I lay on my couch, but I slept not,

For thoughts of thee sweeter than slumber,—
Thoughts where lay ever thine image
As the moon in some soft flowing river!
Or the rose whose image sleeps sweetly
Illuming the depth of a fountain!—
Then rose I, my heart fain to follow,
Which led me here, leading no further!

II.

O sweet one! who art the fulfillment
Of all hope, of my soul's last yearning!
If thou be not some sweet embodiment
Of God, then live I without Him,
Nor feel I the want of Him ever!
If a gift from God thou be'st,
In the gift I forget the giver!
If a gift from God thou be not,
Then there is a greater, a richer—
A greater and richer than God is!

III.

Oh, put thy face to the window!
Throw me a kiss or a flower!
And I'll depart with such joy,
I will sleep not all the night time,
But lay me awake with my rapture!
Yet, thou on thy pillow shall slumber;
For sleep will be wooed by thy beauty;
Yea, slumber, my rival, shall clasp thee,
And kiss thy lips and thy eye-lids
Till thou swoonest unconscious, or conscious

Of life that is timeless, and sweeter
Than the dream of a blossom that slumbers
Dew-wet and a-gleam in the moon-light!

Here ceased his song; and looking up he saw
Her lattice open, and a face he knew
By light of star, look down and smile on him!—
And then an arm, left to the shoulder bare,
And perfecter than sculptor ever wrought,
He saw outreach and pluck a dew-wet rose
From bush that clung and wreathed her window round;
And then the rose he saw her softly press
To lips far sweeter than the rose's lips!
So, consecrating it with such a rite,
She tossed it downward to her lover's feet
And closed her casement, and so disappeared,
As when the moon doth step behind a cloud
And leaves all darkness where before was light.

He picked the rose up she had dropt to him;
And while it yet was with her kisses warm
And sacred of her touch, oft to his lips
He raptly pressed it, drinking rapture thence
Sweet only less than her own lips had been!
Then turning homeward 'long the star-lit streets,
Sweet with the fragrance of nocturnal bloom
And fresh with coolness of the splashing fount,
Oft gazed he upward to the starry height
And spake him in triumphant ecstasy:

"O myriad worlds that swarm the depth of space,
Like golden sparks that from God's anvil rise!

Which one of ye, though nearest circling God,
Bears any form so beautiful as she,
Or any soul blest as her love may bless!"

TWO CITIES.

Ever near the living city,
  Stands the city of the dead—
Followeth the living city,
  As a shadow, silent, sad!

Revel thou, O living city!
  Have thy gala night and day,
At thy gate this shadow stands no
  Revelry can drive away.

Looks it on thy wealth and brilliance,
  Hears thy traffic's noiseful stress,
But thy brilliancy nor clamor
  Breaks its shade nor silentness.

Silent City! constant ever
  Is thy habitants increase;
Who but with the living tarry,
  Take of thee an endless lease!

Ah! without the living city,
  Well dost thou so patient wait,
Since thou knowest sooner, later,
  All shalt thou incorporate!

THE LAST LETTER.

Thy name, whose sound did magic once possess
  To bid all shadows from my heart take flight,
Now heard or seen but wakens bitterness,
  And comes to mar where once it made delight.

Ah! was it love? or was it coquetry?
  No matter now or what it was or seemed,
Since it has passed, and thou no more to me
  May be the same, or what I fondly dreamed!

And thou so changed, can I unchanged remain?
  Must I love still and feel my heart is spurned?
Nay, God has spaired the heart the fruitless pain
  Of loving long where love is not returned!

So my love dieth, thy love being dead,—
  A bitter pain, but soon it will be o'er;
And my dead love from out my heart be shed
  As leaf by leaf falls from the dying flower!

Then be it so, though it was not my will;
  Nay, 'twas my prayer our love should never die;
For while I loved thee as I loved, and still
  Could hope thy love, to live was ecstacy!

Yet, I'll not chide thee who hath slain my love;
  It may be better that it thus should be:
Mayhaps it all was willed of Him above;
  Ah, wise is love, but wiser destiny!

Then be it so; go I my way, go thine;
I would not, if I could, thy love compel;
Deem not my love turns hate, deem not I pine,
I speak my heart: God bless thee! fare thee well!

THE MOON.

Lo, worn and wasted, wearily uplifts
The midnight moon; its cold and weird light
Slow stealing over earth in slumber wrapt,
While long and silent shadows westward point
With stern directness like the wand of doom!

Thou art a world by-gone, so science saith—
Thy vital fires long have been extinct,
And thou in ruins fallen desolate—
Lifeless, echoless, without cloud or dew
Or moving air; in cold vacuity,
Beyond the mind's conception lorn, insphered;
Ah, sad and silent as eternity!—

Aerial tomb! pale world-corpse of the skies!
Wan spectress of the soundless depths of space!
That stealest forth with silence ominous,
To gaze on earth that lies asleep in night,
Again withdrawing into trackless deeps
When morn awakens earth to busy life
And night withdraweth like an hated dream!

Ah, dost thou envy earth her life, and fain
Would blight her with that stony gaze of death?

Or is but pity in thy silent gaze?—
Compassion for the earth, now glad of life,
Yet who shall join thee in thy voiceless round,
A sister spectre to the end of time;
Who in the ways of soundless space shall pass
Thee to repass, giving nor given word,
But silent turning face to thine with look
Lorn as death stricken immortality!

GOD'S WAYS.

Yoke-fellow of his slave the master is.
The tyrant is degraded with his thrall.
The despot breathes a poisoned atmosphere—
Impoisoned of the wrongs he doth inflict—
That sows in life and soul the seed of death,
However outwardly his fortune smiles.
He wraps a poisoned robe about his soul
Who dares to live upon a brother's wrong.
Essentially we take the thing we give,
Though by another name 'tis often called,
And comes to us in some disguising form.
Nay, none we curse more deeply than ourselves!

This must be so, else wrong were mightiest,
And chaos, and not cosmos, here should reign!
This must be true, lest one abroad might sow
The thistle's seed and gather figs therefrom!

LIFE'S STORY.

I met a man low bowed with age;
Said I: "You've turned life's final page:
Now tell me if life's story be
Worth one's perusal, really?"
And this is what to me he said:

"Well, if a story which once read
No reader cares to read again,
Be worth the reading once, ah, then
Life's story is!—for such is it:
None having read it, ever yet
Have wished— as far as I have heard—
To read it over word for word.

MUST TELL ME YES OR NO.

I know a little maiden,
  She must tell me "yes" or "no,"—
She must tell me is life joy;
  She must tell me is it woe!

Oh, it is not life I'm living;
  It is not death I die,
Till of my love I've told her,
  And she hath made reply!—

Till I've avowed my passion
And heard her "yes" or "no!"—
Her "yes," the key to happiness,
Her "no" the key to woe!

Oh, hope as sweet as heaven
Doth now illume my soul;
And now plutonic shadows
Of doubt before me roll!

The God who rules above us—
Man's friend is He or foe?
Ah, wait and hear her answer,—
It's in her "yes" or "no!"

For if indeed she slights me—
Ah, if she answers "no!"
The God who rules above thee,
O, man He is thy foe!

Go, live with hopeless sorrow,
For none doth hear thy prayer;
And when thy days are ended,
Go, die thou in despair!

But if she says she loves me,—
Oh, if she answers "yes!"
Then God is friend above thee,
And wills thy happiness!

Go, live in hope and joy,
For God is friend above;
And at life's close, unfearing,
Die thou, for God is love!

Ah, it is not life I'm living;
It is not death I die,
Till I've avowed my passion,
And she hath made reply!

TO TIME.

Time, ah, Time, what dost thou do?
What is the meaning of thy deeds?
The path thou leadest, whither leads?
Thou buildest and unbuildest, too;—
Dost build the cradle and the tomb;
Thou sowest blight and sowest bloom;
Thou givest and thou takest breath;
Thou sowest seed of life and death;
Thou bringest and doth bear away!—
Yea, playest as a child at play,
That with its childish heart and hands
Doth plan and execute its plans;
And having planned and built, doth then
But tear away to build again!

Ah! child, thou, of Eternity,
At play about thy mother's knee;
And man and all he feels and sees,
But toys given thee to please!

THE OUTLAW.

There dead he lay; succumbed at last
To law so long defied;
A man who was more brute than man,
And like a brute he died.

The simple box in which he lay
His coffin was to be;
All persons passing looked at him,
But none with sympathy.

Nay, all had reasons to be pleased
Such fiend at last lay dead;
For many he had harmed, and all
Had heard of him with dread.

And one, whose brother had been slain
By this fiend now in hell,
Looked on with such emotions as
God gives not words to tell.

Some while he silent gazed; anon,
He lifted up his head
And looked upon the sunless sky,
Then to the crowd he said:

"Behold, the sun behind thick clouds
Today prefers to dwell;
He fears polution of his beams
If on such thing they fell!

"In life the sun shone not on him,
For night was made his day;
And now the fiend from darkness dragged,
Light turns its face away!"

Scarce had the last word left his lips
When, lo! the clouds were cleft,
And on that bloody corpse there fell
A sudden sunny shaft!

All tongues were hushed; awe stricken, all
But mutely stood and stared,
As men might do if suddenly
Some god 'fore them appeared.

The sunbeam passed as suddenly
As it erewhile had come;
The clouds closed over head and cast
O'er all a common gloom.

Each looker-on yet silent stood;
Each wished the next would speak;
A silence reigned all would were broke,
Yet each seemed loth to break.

Anon, an holy man up spoke:
"Lo, God us chides in this!
The thing we stand and loathe and scorn,
Behold, He stoops to kiss!

"He shows how wise His love and broad,
How narrow man's and mean!
Though black that hand and heart with sin,
God's love can wash them clean!

"Ay, whilst we said: 'God hateth him!'
God oped above the sky,
And kissing what we said He cursed,
He tells us that we lie!"

Then spake another from the crowd:
"A mere coincidence!
The food of superstition and the
Awe of ignorance.

The clouds but broke, as oft we've seen,
When sunbeam's sudden glance;
The falling when and where they fell
Was here coincidence.

And look on yonder distant hill—
A flash of sunlight there;
And look upon yon tree as well—
Just so it rested here.

But nonsense! let us prate no more
Of this o'ertaken sinner,
A thing no man nor God could love;
Come, come, let's go to dinner.

O ROSE.

O rose! I begged of her last eve,
When at her gate we went to part,
Because of this, thy history:
That thou had'st slept upon her heart!—

Had felt her bosom's rise and fall!
  Had thrilled beneath her finger tips!
And with thy beauty wooed, perchance,
  The tender pressure of her lips!

O rose! that I have kist and kist
  And yet can never kiss too much,
Because of bliss I drink to kiss
  The rose that knew her finger's touch!

O rose! I've kist and kist, as fain
  Thee never from my lips to part,
Because of rapture, kissing so,
  The rose that slept so near her heart!

O rose! that I have kist and kist
  With kisses rapt and numberless,
Because so sweet a thing is it
  To kiss the Rose that knew her kiss!

O rose! what cup more rapt is quaffed
  Of gods in bowers heavenly,
Than this of thee my kisses drink,
  Because of thy sweet history!

A JUNE DAY CLOSE.

The sun has sunk—
The day is done.
The ardent gold
Of western skies,
Soft fades to gray.

A peace descends,
A dewy rest,
O'er wood and wold,
More sweet than sleep;
And soft as far,
Faint light of star,
Its stealing feet.

A flower here
Doth bow in sleep
Or prayer; and there
Another wakes
And opens wide,
With rapture mute,
Her heart, and drinks
Deliciously
The dewy tide
Of evening's air.

Strange odors sweet,
And musky smells
Descend from hills,
Arise from dells
And float upon
The twilight air—
Strange odors, wild,
Elusive, sweet;
The stealing souls
Of flowers shy,
That shun the day
And ope alone
Their hearts to Dusk,

The veiled maid,
Mysterious,
Who loves and opes
Her heart to them.

The day is done—
A day of June,
A perfect day
And glorious
Of azure skies,
Of lights and shades,
Of blade and leaf,
Of gentle winds,
Of dancing waves,
Of lisping leaves,
Of song and rose,
Of life and love!

The day is done!
From dewy grass
To evening's star,
Rapt silence reigns—
A silence glad
To sorrow's brink!
A silence filled
Of voices
Heard of the soul!
A silence such
As broods upon
The perfect close
Of some grand song.

IN APRIL WOODS.

Oh, the softness of the south winds
  That through April forests flow!
Where the sheath of buds a-burgeon
  Scattered, fall like gentle snow.

Where a myriad myriad blossoms
  At your feet and overhead,
Misty make the woodland ether
  With the pollen dust they shed!

Where the mellow sunlight filters
  Through the budding boughs above,
And a thousand thousand bird songs
  Tell of joy, hope and love!

Where the woodland brooklet beareth,
  On its sheeny bosom glad,
Shedded blossoms of the dogwood,
  Blown from boughs above it spread.

Where Spring's magic wand hath beckoned
  Back to life a thousand things,
And the woodland airs are glinting
  With the spread of gauzy wings!

Where the very loam rejoices,
  And a pulse beats in each tree;
Where the heart of every creature
  Is attuned to ecstacy!

Where each soul supremely feeleth
God within and God above;
Where aloof from doubt and shadow
Hand in hand walk hope and love!

ANTITHESIS OF LOVE.

O bitter sweet, sweet-bitter love!
Thou seraph, serpent, eagle, dove!
Thou joy intense even unto distress;
Thou pain e'en poignant to blissfulness;
Thou softer than pity, thou harsher than hate;
Thou yielder to shadow, thou braver of fate;
Thou blindness out-seeing all vision of eyes;
Thou stronger than iron; thou weaker than sighs;
Thou swift fleeting rapture; thou sluggedest pain;
Thou slayer of giants, thyself phantom slain;
Thou fleetness of tempus, thou slowness of hours;
Thou flowerless thistle; thou thornless flower;
Thou unyielding zephyr; thou granite that yields;
Thou bolt swiftly smiting, thou poison that steals;
Thou hater of evil, sin-lover as well;
Thou beam out of heaven, thou flash out of hell;
Thou madness of madness; thou sanity,
That makes us to be as the gods above be!—
O bitter-sweet, sweet-bitter Love!
Thou seraph, serpant, eagle, dove!

Ah, Love! what art thou? what art thou not?
Thou named of all names, yet nameless still;
For none is there so bold, I wot,

Will dare to label thee and say:
"By this sign know ye Love alway."
Nay, strive to name thee as we will;
Call thee all names of earth below,
Give thee all names of heaven above,
This having done, no more we'll know
Than only this, that "Love is Love!"
O Love! if by another name
Than only "Love" we should thee call,
Ah, what were fitter than that same
Should be the appellation, "All!"

WE LOVE NOW.

Nay, Make no pledges of your love;
Love with oaths you can not tie;
Swear not by saints nor stars above
Love shall never change nor die;
But with your lips on mine let's vow—
'Tis bliss enough—that we love now!

I doubt not that you feel as true
Such pledges, but they are not so:
Yet, know I love as loveth you,
With love I would no change should know;
Yet, 'twixt our kisses we'll but vow—
'Tis bliss enough!—that we love now!

Nay, hush! Love's constrancy? the wind,
Go, search the baseless winds that rove,

And constancy you there will find
  As soon or sooner then in love!
Ah, 'twixt our kisses let us vow—
'Tis bliss enough—that we love now!

It may be that beyond the skies,
  Love up there is constant given;
But here on earth he lights and flies,
  Or else earth too were made as heaven!
Then twixt our kisses let us vow—
Oh bliss enough—that we love now!

Yea, take Love as we find him; he
  Is God's own gift to man below!
Then if Love be inconstancy,
  Hath not God willed that he be so?
Oh, with thy lips on mine let's vow—
God asks no more—that we love now!

HOW AND WHEN WOULD I DIE.?

How and when would I die, ask you?
  When and how, if I
Were given of God the power to choose—
  How and when would I die?

My choice would be the choice of His
  Who knows as know not I;
For He who set the day of my birth,
  He knoweth the day I should die.

Yea, should God come to me and say:
"Behold! what I deny
To others I grant to thee—make choice
How and when thou wouldst die.

"Death's ways are countless; numberless
The years of future lie—
And thou art given the power to choose
How and when thou wouldst die."

Then unto God I'd make response:
"O God, I know not why
Nor whence I'm here, nor whither shall go,
Nor what to be when I die.

"All these are known of Thee alone,
Then, Thou, O God, not I,
Are fittest to choose these things for me—
How and when I should die.

"Choose Thou for me, nor let me know
Thy choice; nay, me deny
All save the faith that Thou choosest for me,
How and when I should die!"

TWO DEMONS.

Of two demons am I haunted
As I travel on life's way,
And no hour and no moment
Cease their torment night nor day.

While awake and while aslumber,
In the street or trackless wood,
Still my steps are demon-haunted,
Still my soul is so pursued.

One the demon Dream is, while the
Other is the demon Thought,
And between these two my being,
Like a ball is tossed and caught.

Oh, for but one hour's slumber,
Restful slumber, dreamless, deep!
Oh, for but one wakeful hour
Into which no thought should creep!

ROSE, OF QUEENLY LOVELINESS.

Rose, of queenly loveliness!
In her name, thee do I kiss!
By thy soul ethereal,
By thy charms imperial,
By thy beauty without blur,
Thou art fitting type of her!

Yet, O Rose, fair as thou art,
Know I what to thee'll impart,
A diviner beauty still!
Tell thee? Listen and I will!

Go thou to her bower, Rose—
Go as blessing spirit goes,

That, in answer to a prayer,
Soft descends with heaven's air,
And sweet watch divinely keeps
Where the sleeper smiles and sleeps!
Go, sweet Rose, at eventide;
Be my thoughts thy willing guide,
For full well they know the way
Thither, or by night or day.

Steal her lattice bars between,
And, so seeing, yet unseen,
Watch her till her eyelids close,
And her breath soft comes and goes:
Measuredly, and sweet and deep—
And thou knowest her asleep.

Then, as softly as a dream
Floats on slumber's voiceless stream,
Kiss for me her finger tips,
Press thy lips upon her lips!
Kiss her eyelids and her cheek!
Play awhile at hide-and-seek
With Dan Cupid in her hair!
Then upon her bosom fair,
Near her heart, rest long and long!
Rest until the matin song
Of sweet bird in bower near
Smite and smite again her ear,
And she wakens, wondering,
Wide-eyed, if she heareth sing
Bird in dream, or if it be
Bird song in reality!

Gaze thou then into her eyes ;
In their depth imparadise
Once thy soul ! Then 'ere she deem
Thee but vision of her dream,
As a dream, indeed, depart
And back hasten to my heart !
Back with thy sweet history;
Which, O Rose, shall give to thee
A diviner beauty's glow
Than impaints thy petals now !
Which unto thee shall bequeath
Sweeter fragrance than thy breath !
And on thee a worth impress
Passed all jeweled preciousness !

I shall hold thee thing divine !
Precious relic for a shrine !
In whose presence I shall feel
A diviner presence steal !
Whose soft petals, when my lips
Press them, shall my soul eclipse
With a rapture only less
Sweet than were her touch or kiss !
Yea, for thy sweet history—
Such as gods might envy thee—
Sweeter, fairer thou shalt be
To my heart, than all save she !

NOT UNTO HER.

Not unto her, O death! art thou unkind—
  She who with folded hands lies here asleep—
  But unto us who here above her weep,
Yea, unto us whom she hath left behind!
She walks in utter light, while shadows blind
  And false lights lead us into shades more deep;
  She now hath gained the height whence she doth sweep
With vision by no mortal bounds confined—
Yea, seeth all and now doth understand!
  Beyond that portal where no fear can go
  Hope hath she followed on unto its goal;
And with the angels standing hand in hand,
  In smiling pity looks on us below
  Who weep that death should liberate a soul.

LOVE'S ONLY RIVAL.

Ah, do you fear your rival
  May win her heart from you?
Then love her more than he loves,
  And vainly he shall woo!

Your rival owns a mansion,
  While you live in a cot?
Then love her more then he loves,
  And you need fear him not!

Or is your rival handsome,
  While you are commonplace?
Then love her more than he loves,
  Nor envy him his grace!

Or is your rival famous,
  While you have made no name?
Ah, love her more than he loves,
  And she'll forget his fame!

Love is of love won only;
  A heart must buy a heart;
And naught but love can rival love—
  These laws no man may thwart!

Nay, won was never woman
  Not won by greatest love—
The greatest love that came her way,
  Though little it may prove.

Then if your rival win her,
  The cause is plain to view—
You loved, perhaps you loved her much,
  He loved her more than you!

You loved, perhaps, with passion
  Deep as your heart could prove—
God gave your rival greater
  Capacity to lover!

A SUMMER VIGNETTE.

A bright stream wends,
A blue sky bends,
And green is the leafy shore;
A glad sun glows,
A light wind blows
With breath of the woodland flower.

From wind-blown trees
Wild melodies
Of birds, come blithely entrancing;
Shadow and beam,
On shore and stream,
With noiseless feet are dancing.

In winds that pass,
The woodland grass
And flowers are softly bended;
Leaf whispers low,
And murmurous flow
Of waters are sweetly blended.

'Mong bough a-sway
In winds a-play
Above the river flowing,
A nest is swung,
With downy young
Above its margin showing.

A-down the limb,
And nearer them,
A snake is slowly creeping,
Whilst here and there,
In wild despair,
The mother-bird is sweeping.

* * * * *

A bright stream wends,
A blue sky bends,
And green is the leafy shore;
A glad sun glows,
A light wind blows
With breath of the woodland flower.

FATE.

"I shall not sail today.
The seas are running high,
And westward, far away,
A dark cloud stains the sky,"
Said Pyro, musingly,
And let the day pass by.

"Today I shall not sail.
'Tis Friday, and they say
He ever meets with bale
Who sets him forth that day,"
Thought Pyro, waiting till
The day had passed away.

"Today I shall sail not.
Though calm are skies and sea,
Three croaking ravens blot
The skies portentously;
I shall not leave this spot
Till signs be fair," mused he.

And while he sat distraught,
And gazed on sea and sky,
Down shot, as quick as thought,
From silent depths on high,
A meteorite and brought
Him death—death instantly!

THY PART.

If lovest her with all thy heart
And she so loveth thee;
Why, then I say thou hast thy part
Of life's felicity.

So be content, and go thy way,
Nor seek for blessing truer;
But when thou prayest, only pray
Thy love and her's endure!

What though thou toilest for thy bread,
And house within a cot?
What though the clouds above thee spread,
The sun or stars to blot?

What though the rose may have its thorns?
  What though the wheat have tares?
What though thy path be rough of stones?
  What though thy feet have scars?

What though thy friends may thee forget?
  What though thy foes pursue?
What though thy past may hold regret,
  The morrow, hopes untrue?

Yet if thou lovest, and she loves
  With love of equal worth,
Thou hast thy part of what God gives
  Of Paradise to earth!

Then be content and go thy way,
  Nor seek for blessing truer;
And when thou prayest, only pray
  Thy love and her's endure.

YOUR LOT AND MINE.

And you have climbed the mount of fame;
  Are named with praise in every clime;
Yea, it is said you've writ your name
  Beyond the utmost tide of time,
In letters fadeless as yon star,
No touch of time may ever mar!

But there is one who recks you not,
  Nor cares for you and your renown;

One who is fair without a blot,
  One who is crowned with beauty's crown;
Ah, one who looks with careless eye
On you, and gives me sigh for sigh!

Nay, I do covet not your name,
  Nor envy you the crown you wear,
If, gaining, I must wear the same
  On wrinkled brow and grizzled hair,
While Ariana, passing by,
Shall look on me with careless eye!

Ah, take your name and fame, begone!
  Let millions on both sides the sea
Lift up your praise; let but the one,
  One only, turn her smile on me!
For this is glory, this is fame
Enough, and all that I would claim!

BEHOLD YON GILDED DOME.

Behold yon gilded dome that lifts on high,
  And proudly basks in the admiring gaze
  Of all who pass below earth's traveled ways!
But who, so passing, turns in thought an eye
On those dark, sunless stones beneath that lie?—
  Foundation stones which, that yon dome might raise
  Its brow through song and light to gain man's praise,
Themselves all save oblivion deny!
  Ah, even such our social edifice!
  Its gilded dome, affluent idleness

That, envied of all men, aloft doth rise;
  While humble labor, unto which is known
  Not praise of men, is the foundation stone,
Up-bearing all, seen only of God's eyes!

OLD ERE WE ARE YOUNG.

In youth we say: "When I'm a man!"
And plan and execute our plan
Through rapt anticipation. When
We are become a man, ah, then
We fondly say: "When youth was mine!"—
And wrapt in revery divine,
Vouchsafed of mem'ry's magic powers,
Now youth the first time seemeth ours!

We live our youth in memory,
Our manhood live in hope; ah, we
Live neither in reality!

ALICIA.

As pure was she as yon white cloud,
  Till fell one fatal hour
When blinded passion flecked with sin,
  Her soul's unsullied flower.

And when she wakened to her sin
  'Tis said no word spake she;
But stood aghast that she should live,
  And not her purity!

With upward look and clasping hands
  She knelt her down to pray:
But, oh, so bitter her remorse,
  She turned her face away—

Ah, turned her face away from God,
  Nor upward looked again!
She could not pray for shame that wraught
  Like madness in her brain!

Like wounded thing that inward bleeds,
  Yet help of none may claim,
She turned aside in lonely ways,
  And perished of her shame.

* * * *

In yonder grove her grave is made—
  In lonely, shadowed spot;
And it is said a bird there sings
  When other birds sing not.

It comes when shades of evening fall,
  And dews of twilight creep;
And sings, so sadly, sweetly sings,
  'Tis said, who hear it, weep.

It comes, but whence, there's none may tell,
  And sings till dawn of day;
It flyeth hence, but whither it goes,
  None know—it flyeth away!

Some say it is her soul released
  Awhile from bonds below,
And come to warn all maids who hear,
  To shun her sin and woe.

Some say it is her soul come down
  In semblance of a bird,
To say God heard her prayer, although
  Not her own prayer she heard!

A VERNAL CHANT.

Put thy mouth to the trumpet of winds,
O March!
And sound thou the rapt resurrection
Of leaf and blade and flower!
And out of the tomb of cold silence,
Songs vernal of birds re-awaken!

Blow! blow! blow!
Till the icy tomb up-yieldeth
The rivulet glad that on speedeth
With chatter and song and laughter,
Endowed of a thousand glad voices
As wild and as sweet and as varied
As the flowers that spring 'long its shores,
And dance in the frolicsome breezes!

Blow! blow! blow!
Till myriad buds now a-slumber,
By envious Winter long sealed in

Oblivious silence and darkness,
Awake and dilate in the sunlight,
The miracle beautiful ever
Of tenderly bourgeoning leaflet!

Blow! blow! blow!
Till the soft, the delicious showers,
As sweet as the tears are of gladness,
With musical murmur descend them
O'er field and forest, impearling
Each blade and leaf and flower!

Blow! blow! blow!
Till the chrysalis break as a bud breaks,
And the butterfly, bright as a blossom,
Comes forth as a flower 'mong flowers!

Blow! blow! blow!
Till the gray fields and hills, o'er bended
Of skies now as sad and as ashen,
A velvety sheen of emerald
Put on under skies bright of azure!

Blow! blow! blow!
Till maple and willow o'er leaning
The river drop bloom on the waters,
And leap the glad fishes and gambol
Long sunlitten, shell-gleaming shallows!

Blow! blow! blow!
Till deep in the heart of the forest
Around mossy boles of its giants,

The modest and maidenly violet,
With coy, delicious expectance,
Wide opens her sweet eyes of azure!

Blow! blow! blow!
Till clothed in a mantle of blossom
And bees, stand the apple and cherry,
While mocking birds' notes from their top-spray
Down trickle and ripple, a song-rill
A-flow from a mountain of blossom!

RIGHT IS MIGHT.

Shall we the battle win? Ah, let
This question give no pause!
One thing we have a right to choose,
And only one—our cause!

And if we choose but righteously,
Then fear no foe to meet;
For, though he slay us on the field;
We'll suffer not defeat.

Yea, though he slay us, and so gain
To-day the world's applause;
'Tis he hath lost, 'tis we have won,
If ours the better cause!

For right is mightiest of might,
And cannot conquered be;
Right's foe but seems to win, and right
But loses seemingly.

Right oft hath lost the battle, but
  Hath never lost a cause!
Right's foe hath won applause of men—
  Right win's the gods' applause!

ALONE HATE SEVERS.

'Tis more than continents and seas
  That cometh them between;
A thought might easily bridge these
  Did they but intervene—
Not time nor distance may divide
Two souls that yet in love abide!

'Tis more than death between them come,
  For Hope through Death may see;
With one on either side the tomb
  They need not severed be;
Not parted they who still retain
The hope to meet and clasp again!

Ah, it is Hate doth them divide!
  A gulf than seas e'er rolled
More deep; than Death, more dark and wide,
  More voiceless and more cold!
Alone Hate severs; separate,
Alone are they who part in Hate!

UNDER THE STARS.

I.

O stars a-twinkle in the vault of night,
Forever silent, ever sadly bright;
Like eyes that gaze at once through fear and faith;
Like hope illumining the brow of death!
When primal man first raised above his eyes,
Thine did they meet, as now, in voiceless skies;
And since that day, upon his moan and mirth,
His hates and loves, upon his death and birth,
Thou hast looked down from thy far depths above,
With looks that nor approve nor disapprove!

II.

Dost any secret in thy silence keep
Which if man knew he less would fear and weep?
Oh, surely thou art nearer God than we,
And being so, what dost thou hear or see?
Through thy long sleepless watch to God so near,
What hast thou heard not given man to hear?
What whisper of what secret of His throne
Unto thy sleepless ears hath yet been born?
What vision of what fate's decree hath swept
'Fore thine awed soul whilst thou hast smiled or wept?
Hath man a part that dies not with his clay?
Where are the dead? Oh, where, and what are they?

III.

Ah, what thine answer? Silence! this alone;
Yet by thine eyes that gaze into mine own—

O mystical, mute eyes, that stare and stare,
So human-like, half hope and half despair!
Thou too hast learned, through all thy sleepless years,
No more than man, yet dupe of hopes and fears;
Thou too with mystery art hedged about,
And with a soul at once begloomed of doubt
And lit of hope, wait on in peace and pain,
Till cometh death to bring thee loss or gain!

ONCE I TRAVELED THROUGH A FOREST.

Once I traveled through a forest, wide and murmurous as a sea;
Traveled all the day and heard I but the wild-bird's minstrelsy,
Or the murmur of the breezes, or the cawing of a crow,
Or the barking of a squirrel—watching as I passed below,
Awed among the giant columns of the trees moss-grown and hoar,
Where the sleeping lights and shadows tessellate the forest floor.

Long and long I fared me onward, seeing never human trace,
Until sudden in the forest came I to an open space:
Here some one had been before me, built a hut but long had gone,
And his cabin long neglected, wore an aspect most forlorn.

Weeds and brambles choked the pathway that had to
and from it led,
And untrodden moss and lichen as its door-mat was
spread.
Through its roof the golden sunbeams like a mockery
were sent;
Through it leaf and nut had fallen from high boughs
that o'er it lent.

As I neared it—awed and silent, with that sence we
feel alone
When we come upon the spot where man has built and
lived and gone—
Flew an owl from out the chimney, leaped a fox through
open door,
Slept a serpent on the door-step, crawled another
'cross the floor.

In the door-yard a nameless, monumentless grave was
made,
For the simple board that bore the name had long and
long decayed;
And the riant growth of nature wild, above the sleeper
spread,
To whose resting place no human footsteps any longer
led.

Round about, the trees were belted and had withered
long ago;
Now decayed their limbs were dropping piecemeal to
the earth below;

Branchless trunks that blackened lifted silent into
sunny air,
Like a thousand masts that rotted on dead waters
without care.

Here the wild birds, blythe and songful, seemed for
reasons not to come,
For this space of open sunlight seemed more lone than
forest gloom!
Ay, the only bird beheld I in this sorrow of the wood,
Was a voiceless bird, and sadful, fittest for such soli-
tude;
Was a bird of sombre plumage, broad and solemn sweep
of wing;
Bird that knows no song, and seeing, no heart hath
the will to sing;
Bird that slays no life, but follows ever close upon
death's tread;
Silent, sorrowful of aspect, as in pity of the dead!
Two sat perched upon a beetling crag that crumbled
in decay,
While one other darkly circled 'gainst a white cloud
far away,

Oh, so silent, ghostly, lonely was this sunlit solitude,
Here I lingered not, but plunged me back into the
shadowed wood!

A TWILIGHT PICTURE.

The sun has set; the golden West
  Fast softens to a tender hue;
O'er earth descends a sense of rest;
  On leaf and flower falls the dew.

The tinkling bell of homeward herd
  Afar and faintly smites mine ear—
The dewy silence now is blurred
  By crickets' croon in leafage near.

Where twilight shadows deepest are,
  The fire-flies now glint and glow;
Each as some cloud-bedriven star,
  Alternate lost and won to view.

Night beetles rise from dewy grass;
  The moth on mottled wings flits by;
The bats on soundless pinions pass
  Two and fro across the sky.

Now slumbers Hope, while Memory
  Awakes and reigns in pensive power;
Now gentle sadness, silently
  Falls on the heart as dew on flowers!

MY HEART'S DILEMMA.

A score of fairest ones there be
  Who all at once assail my heart;

O hunted heart, where cans't thou flee?
  On every hand there comes a dart
From form or face or tresses fair,
Or eyes where love hath made his lair!

Ah! there be eyes as dark as night,
  And eyes as blue as skies in spring;
And tresses like the sun's own light,
  And tresses like a raven's wing;
And every shade of hair and eye
That 'twixt these two extremes may lie!

My heart is as a butterfly
  Lost in some garden rich and rare,
Where beauty doth with beauty vie;
  He fain would light but knows not where;
And so, unchoosing, waits and sighs
And dies of pain in Paradise!

ANSWERS HE NOT BACK.

I.

Ah! answers he not back
  Who went to death!
  Nay, no more saith
Than doth the silent stone
  He sleeps beneath.

Spring waves her magic wand,
  And out of sleep
  Awake and leap

To light a thousand things
That fly or creep.

And where were naked boughs,
Lo, leaf and bloom!
And 'neath the loam
Of earth, wake seed and break
Their prison gloom!

But answers he not back
Who went to death!
Nay, no more saith
Than doth the silent stone
He sleeps beneath!

II.

Comes Summer, deeply glad;
With leafage dense,
And blue expanse
Of skies, and grassy plains
Where flowers glance.

Birds love and bill and sing
In field and grove;
The glad bees rove
'Mong blossoms, swallows cleave
Blue skies above.

But answers he not back
Who went to death!
Nay, no more saith

Than does the silent stone
He sleeps beneath!

III.

Comes Autumn, crowned of fruits;
With sheaves of gold,
And manifold
Glad hues of leaf and blade
From wood and wold.

With some sweet pathos in
Her brightest charm,
And in her warm
Sunshine a chill, and in
Her calm, alarm!

But answers he not back
Who went to death!
Nay, no more saith
Than doth the silent stone
He sleeps beneath!

IV.

Comes Winter grim, and strips
The fields and wood;
And solitude
Reigns where reigned love and song;
And shadows brood

Where light was; and winds moan
And shriek and rave
O'er earth, a grave,
With no thing fair or glad
On land or wave!

But answers he not back
  Who went to death!
  Nay, no more saith
Than doth the silent stone
  He sleeps beneath!

LOVE AND WEDLOCK.

We love, we love, and life is sweet,
  Two souls one music make;
One joy fills two hearts complete,
  One woe two hearts would break!

The past holds no dead joy that we
  Now mourn that it be riven;
Nor turn we to futurity
  To ask if else be given.

Nay, thou art faultless in my sight,
  I even so in thine;
For now we see but by love's light
  That maketh all divine!

Ah, thus love maketh life today!
  But love's inconstancy—
And on the morrow who can say
  Where he'll take wings and flee?

If love once ours would not depart,
  But e'er his wings lay by,

Oh, then, when love had bound the heart,
  Wedlock the hands might tie.

But of all lots by day's eye skanned,
  Theirs is the lot most blighted,
Whose hands are tied by wedlock's bands
  While hearts grow disunited!

Behold yon wild grapevine that binds
  Yon two fair trees together—
A wreath of leaf and bloom it twines
  While holds fair summer weather.

But come in winter and behold
  When flower and leaf are neither,
And like a serpent, bare and cold,
  It binds them still together!

Ah, thus the bond of wedlock ties
  When, like the leaf and flower,
Sweet, fickle love else whither flies
  And mocks all prayer, all power!

A PICTURE.

It is an evening in the month of May:
From out the West an ebon cloud slow lifts
With awful brow against the azure sky.
Like some far, rugged mountain range it seems.
Where peak doth topple peak, and caverns yawn

In darkness fathomless, and canyons sleep
In sunless depths of sombre granite walls.
Anon fierce lightnings leap from peak to peak,
Which, for an instant, glow with lucent flame,
Then straight are dark as Erebus again;
Whilst thunder, far and deep and terrible,
Breaks on the ear at solemn intervals.

Toward the West green pasture-lands out-roll
In gentle undulations like a sea,
And like as drifts of foam upou a sea,
The snowy fleece of grazing flocks is seen.
Within this meadow stands an only tree,
An apple-tree, so blossomful, it seems
At distance seen, a mound of pink and snow.
Upon its topmost spray, mid blossoms throned,
There sits a mockingbird, whose jocund lay,
As sweet and fearless as angelic strains,
Fills up the solemn pauses that are breathed
Betwixt the deep and distant thunder peals.

NATURE'S IRONY.

I.

I saw two mated birds one April morn
  Sit side by side upon a budding spray,
  And sing and sing as if this life alway
Young hope and love unclouded should adorn;
As happy as two lovers met above
  Whom death had parted long, but will no more;
  And meeting now, with all their sorrows o'er,
They breathe the ecstasy of endless love.

II.

I passed again and these two happy birds
  Were building now their nest in blossom boughs;
  And as they brought and built their cozy house,
Talked ever each to each in tuneful words;
Nay, scarce could build their nest for happiness!
  A straw they brought and placed, then sat and sang,
  And the sweet sylvan nook unceasing rang
With echoes of their joy's mad excess.

III.

I passed again, and saw their finished nest;—
  In workmanship perfection, as must prove
  All handiwork done for the sake of love,
For God directs who works at love's behest!—
Within its downy depts five small eggs lay;

The male, from topmost bough, poured forth his song,
While she, his mate, hopped silently among
The leaves with joy no song or words might say.

IV.

I passed again; the downy cup now held
Five tiny birds with gaping, yellow bills;
The parent birds, 'twixt tender chirps and trills,
Brought food to them by love and joy compelled.
In sweet June winds the boughs were softly swayed;
Soft, sunlit skies were bended over head;
A flower-sprinkled sward beneath was spread
Where shadows danced to music zephyr made.

V.

I passed again; with cries of wild affright
The parent birds now darted 'round their nest,
Above whose rim a serpent reared his crest
With birdling in his jaws—a monstrous sight!—
In sweet June winds the boughs were softly swayed;
Soft, sunlit skies were bended overhead;
A flower-sprinkled sward beneath was spread
Where shadows danced to music zephyr made!

AGNOSTIC.

We know not whence we come,
Nor whither go;
We only know
We wake and find ourselves
On earth below.

We know not wherefore death,
Nor wherefore life,
Nor peace nor strife
Nor love nor hatred,
Happiness nor grief.

We know not why a rose
A thorn should bear,
Nor why hope, fear,
Nor wherefore Night a crown
Of stars should wear.

Many there be who deem
They understand
What God has planned,
And show a scroll they claim
Is from God's hand.

But creeds do shift and fade;
Religions die;
All years go by,
And leave man asking still:
Whence? whither? why?

What was truth yesterday
To-day denies.
Ah, the most wise
Of all of us, at best,
Do but surmise.

The most man knows is that
He nothing knows;

Mystery flows
Around and through him—
It seems God chose

To grant no certainty;
Nay, hope and doubt,—
'Twixt these, about
The soul is tossed, till death
Doth shut life out!

And then, and then—ah, what
Shall then disclose?
The thorn? or rose?
Or both, as in this life?
Who knows? who knows?

THE GRASSHOPPER.

Who so takes his careless ease
As the grasshopper?
Tumbling in the sunny grass,
Careless of what time may pass,
On from hour to hour he
Lives a life of jollity.
Looks behind him nor before—
The present is enough and more—
With the sun and sky above
And the grassy fields below
He will hop and sing and love,
Leaving care for those who know
More, or would know more, than these.

Who so takes his careless ease
As the grasshopper?
Climbing to the swaying tops
Of blooming weed or grass, he hops,
Never caring where or how
He may light, or high or low;
On a bee or butterfly
Pausing on some blossom nigh,
On a leaf or under it,
On a blossom or a thorn;
He will right himself and sit,
All as happily as one
Pleased as God sees fit to please.

Who so takes his careless ease
As the grasshopper?
Watch him how himself he flings
Reckless into air and sings!
Brief alike his flight and song,
But they both are blithe and strong.
When each songful flight is sped,
Drops he, mayhaps, on his head;
But no accidents provoke
Him to murmur or complain;
Nay, he takes all as a joke,
And is up and off again,
Glad among the grumbling bees.

Who so takes his careless ease
As the grasshopper?
But lo! the while his song was blithe,
Swooped a swallow like a sythe,

Caught him in its beak and crushed,
And his song a-sudden hushed!—
Well, though brief his life, 'twas bright;
All was morn—no eve, no night;
No regret e'er crept behind,
Never shade of fear before—
Death cast no shadow first to blind,
But ere a happy song was o'er,
Smote glad life to dreamless peace
No alarm can stir!
Ah, who so takes his careless ease
As the grasshopper!

ANDREVUOLA.

I.

In cool, delicious shade of trees wind-whispering,
Deep in lush grass, I stretch my limbs recumbent;
And at my feet far roll wind-waven meadows—
A sea of blossom with all bees a-murmur!
The songs of birds come, varied, sweet and joyous;
In azure skies the happy swallow drifteth;
The zephyr, laden with the breath of blossom,
Comes softly, sweetly, as in dreams come kisses!
And like the love of God, the golden sunlight
Floods earth and sky in boundless, silent splendor!
O June, of all the year her crowning glory!

Thou highest height of life and joy and beauty,
Which, since the fall of man, fair nature reacheth!

II.

And yet, O June, well named the "month of roses!"
I know of one whose smile to me is more
Than thou art to the earth or skies above it!
I know of one, the magic of whose presence
Might make all months so fair I may not choose me
Betwixt December and the "month of roses!"
I know of one whom, when I stroll beside her,
Amid thy fairest prospects, I do mark not
Thy rarest rose, nor reck thy sweetest bird-note!
I know of one, a thought of whom to me comes
Sweeter, richer, June, than airs that wander,
Breathed at twilight from thy dewy bowers!

III.

Tell whom she is? Nay, June, not I will tell thee,
For thou art jealous now to hear about her.
Her eyes are bluer, June, than thy blue skies are;
More golden is her hair than is thy sunlight;
Her voice is sweeter than thy bird or brooklet;
Thou hast no lily white as her small hand is:
Her lips, her cheeks do shame thy fairest roses!
Tell but her name? I will upon thy promise—
Thy sacred promise, given on thy honor—
To let thy laughing brooklet murmur ever
The magic sound; let thy birds ever utter
It in their songs; thy winds it ever whisper
Through field and forest, borne on wings of fragrance!
Then I should wander 'mong thy fields and bowers,

As through some land by sounds elysian haunted!
Let this but be, O June, and I will tell thee
Her name, her name! Thou wilt? I trust thy honor.
Be still, heart! let me speak—Andrevuola!

* * * * * * * * *

O wind, what sayest thou in the boughs above me?
O bird, what sayest thou in yon spray of blossom?
O brook, what sayest thou 'mong thy water lilies?—
Her name! her name! thou sayest Andrevuola!

THE WISE ARE JUST.

"Ah, wise and brave was he! Most wise and brave!"

But tell us of his life that we may judge
If you speak justly in such praise of him.
True wisdom sees that, in accord with laws
Eternal, Right is mightiest of might,
And soon or late availeth in all things.
The wise man knows that all he gains by fraud;
That all he may achieve against the right,
Is but his seeming gain, his real loss!
The wise man knows that though the end were just,
Yet should he gain it through dishonest means,
He could but shame it and by it be shamed.
The wise seek honored ends through honest means,
And should they fail to gain their ends, yet they
Are wiser than to count their efiorts loss,

For honest means are ends within themselves,
And bless us in their use.

Ah, wisdom knows
That even such are Gods eternal laws;
That even such are principles divine,
By which God wrought, when out of Chaos sprang
Fair Cosmos as a flower from the dust!

Your wise man, then; how fares he by this light?
Was honesty with him an holy thing?
Sat truth and justice soveregn of his soul?
Were deeds he sowed the same he wished to reap?

"But he was wise and brave! So wise and brave!"

Fool! Know'st thou not that wisdom may not be
Where honesty is not? Where justice fails?
Fool! Know'st thou not who dares to brave the right,
But proves his madness, not his bravery?

IN THE SHADOW OF HER BRIGHTNESS.

In the bright October forest randomly my steps are led,
Where the green and gold and crimson over-canopy my head;
Where the fallen leaves around me spread a carpet for my feet;
Where the soft winds harp above me with a music sad as sweet;
Where a sunlit sky is bended, and the golden light it spills
On the golden leaves around me seemeth gilded while it gilds:

Where the woodland brook flows muffled with the leaves upon its tide;
Where the lily stalk is standing with its blossom scattered wide:
Where the bright leaves twinkle falling with each softest wind that sighs;
Where the crow to crow is calling and the jay to jay replies.

Oh! the sweetness and the sadness in October's wood and wold;
In the sounding of her voices, in her colors manifold;
In her joyous partings, greetings. in her silent sense of tears;
In her "farewells" sighful whispered, in her laugh that mocks her fears;
In the shadow of her brightness, in the glory of her gloom;
In her hope of resurrection, in her shadow of the tomb!

DARKEST.

It was a picture I would fain forget,
Yet doth persistently to memory cling
As if it meant me to accuse, and were
Retributive in its persistency.

'Twas sunset on a bleak November day.
The city growled beneath its shroud of smoke
That constant oozed of countless chimney flues.
A city of a thousand thousand homes

With brightly burning hearths. A city with
Its schools, its churches, charities and parks;
Its traffic, commerce, factory and forge;
A city with its thousand teeming tills
And myriad shows of prideful opulence.

There in the backyard of this city, where
The garbage of the town is hauled and dumpt;
There where the ownerless and off-cast cur,
Emaciated, skulks in search of food,—
There while the shadows gray of twilight stole,
One bleak November sunset, I beheld
A woman thinly clad in grimy rags,
Stooping, silent searching in a garbage pile.

I did not look into her countenance,
Because I dared not; nay, my very soul
Did turn its eyes away lest it should read
The history inwritten in that face!

THE MESSAGE OF THE SNOW.

The birds are flown;
The leaves are blown;
The brown earth lies
'Neath ashen skies,
That like a pall above her spread!
The winds are still,
The airs are chill,

As is the breath
That broods beneath
The marble roof where sleep the dead!

Lo, now the snow!
Big flakes and slow,
O'er hill and wood,
O'er field and flood,
Descends from skies of voiceless gloom;
Like ghostly things,
On noiseless wings,
And soundless beat
Of phantom feet,
That from the realm of death have come!

White messenger!
What saith to her,
Sad earth that lies
'Neath ashen skies
As one, who hopeless sorroweth?
"Ah, peace bring we,
And purity
They know who know
Nor joy nor woe—
The peace and purity of Death!"

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE.

Let us not scorn the Past, nor worship it;
But ever holding it in reverence due,
Take gratefully and lovingly what gift
Of wisdom it may have to offer us,
Which, joined with our knowledge of today,
But can the nobler make our present life.

II.

But while we look with revesence to the Eld,
And justly boast the greatness of today,
Let us remember there's a greater yet,
And preciouser, than all the gloried past,
Or knowledge or achivement of today—
'Tis that which bideth "On and upward"—aye,
The spirit of all progress!—from the womb
Of future singing to the souls of men
This sibyllic song, ever keenest heard
And followed gladliest of highest souls!

III.

Ideals realized, or ends attained,
To souls of greatest worth, straightway become
But stepping stones to higher, nobler, still!
The glory of all ages of the past,
Shines not to lure man back to them again,
But burn as lamps to light him onward still.
The Golden Age lies onward, not behind,
And ever is the best to be achieved!

The individual or nation, who
Abideth in this faith, tends ever towards
Sublimest heights of beauty and of truth,
The glory and perfection of the gods!

WHEN LOVELIEST.

Whether seen at church or opera, or at any social fete;
Or at her domestic duties, or out shopping on the street,
Lovely is my maiden sweeheart as some perfect dawn
in June!
Beautiful as dewy evening crowned of stars and cres-
cent moon!
Queenliest my maiden sweetheart, charmfulest of all
to me;
My heart's fondest, raptest dreaming realized—ah,
such is she!

II.

But her beauty charms me most—aye, raptliest my
soul doth stir,
When I see her love of children and the children's love
of her;
When I see them gather 'round her, drawn to her as
she to them;
When I see her stoop and kiss them clinging to her
garment hem;
When against her loving bosom lovingly their cheeks
they press
And her virgin face is lit of mother love and hap-
piness!

III.

Then her loveliness, thrice lovely, thrills my soul with ecstasy:
Then thrice potent is the magic of the spell she wields o'er me!
Then in soul I kneel and worship, nor deem such idolatry!
Then the tears, I know not whyfore, steal delicious to mine eyes;
Tears as sweet as is the dew that kist of morn a-tremble lies
On the bosom of the roses in the gates of Paradise!
Tears that flow when joy yieldeth to delight unspeakable;
Tears that flow when perfect beauty greets the vision of the soul!

AT HER GRAVE.

"Thou loved and dear departed,
That drooped and faded and died,
Leaving me here broken hearted,
Oh, whither from me dost thou hide?

"Thy voice no more shall I hear?
Thine image no more shall I see?
Oh, on earth, in skies and air,
I look and listen for thee!

"In tenderest hush of even,
When one star is all there be,
When earth seems nearest heaven,
I look and listen for thee!

"In deep mid-hours of night,
When all seems asleep save me;
Beneath the starry height
I look and listen for thee!

"Ah, wilt thou no more be seen,
Nor thy voice come more to me?
Oh, do I wait in vain, in vain!
And look and listen for thee?"

He paused: his grief intenser grew;
He stood on the brink of despair;
When on her grave himself he threw
And offered up this prayer:

"O God, if not my heart must break;
If not my grief must make me mad;
If not despair these tears must slake;
If not the dead, in truth, be dead!

"If hearts be joined not to be rent
In sunder and left desolate;
If love on earth was never meant
To be more cursed a thing than hate!

"Then hear me, God, hear now my prayer,
As here upon her grave I bow:
Let her but speak to me—appear—
Now, God, Oh, even now!"

He ceased; what did he see or hear?
The far blue sky unmoved bent o'er him;
A viper from its grassy lair
Crawled and coiled and hissed before him;

A viper, vexed by his wild prayer,
Fearing from his intrusion, scath,
Crawled forth from out its grassy lair—
Crawled and coiled and hissed in wrath!

FEAR THOU, AND HOPE.

Upon the grave of his belov'd
Knelt Alla 'neath night's solitude,
And questioned death till death was moved
And 'fore him stood—

Stood as an angel clothed in light
As sweet and solemn as the stars,
When the serene of mid-most night
No whisper mars.

"For unknown ages man hath sought,
O Death, to know what thou may'st be;
But time nor learning yet hath taught
Thy mystery.

"Into thy silence infinite
We call and cry with hearts a-break;
But from thy silent depth and height
No echoes wake.

"Ah, what this awful secret, Death,
That thy unbroken, silence seals?
Hath God pronounced 'He perisheth
Who it reveals?'

"If man through science or through prayer,
At last should find thy mystery,—
Ah, would it stay him of dispair,
Or ecstasy?

"Our loved ones who have gone before,
Do not they wait for us to come?
Or do we part for evermore
Beside the tomb?

"Whom thou hast smitten seem asleep:
Do they not dream and will awake?
Or is a slumber their's so deep
Not God can break?

"Oh, what art thou—or cursed or blest?
Who of thee speaks more truly, Death—
The fool or sage? Who knows thee best—
Or fear, or faith?"

Death listened with unchanging cheek;
Once only deigned her lips to ope,
Then only these four words she spake:
"Fear thou, and Hope!"

Here Death dissolved as mist and past;
And Alla, with uplifted eyes,
Saw only now the calm and vast
Star-litten skies!

MUSIC.

O Music, what art thou? Some magic wand
To touch the soul and bid it 'scape the bond
Awhile, that binds it to mortality,
And upward float on wings of ecstasy!—
E'en as the morn with wand of golden beam
Hath touched the dew and bid it glint and gleam
Till upon wings of fragrant airs it rise
And float, a golden mist, in azure skies!

II.

Ah, what art thou? the spirit's element
Wherein, when free, it shall e'er know content?
What art thou, Music? love articulate?
Light flashes from beyond the realm of fate?
Voiced rapture, thou? rapt beauty audible?
The cup that gods for gods above us fill?
Ah, what art thou? We know not,—only know
That from and to some end divine, thy flow!

III.

Too transient are thy visits to our sphere!
With lips or hand we briefly call thee here,
But thou wilt tarry not upon life's strand:
Where goest, leaving once our lips, our hand,
And falleth silence like a fragrant gloom?
Where but to heaven which must be thy home!

IV.

As yon illimitable, azure deep,
Where through all starry spheres in concord sweep,

Doth fill all space, O music, dost not thou
Fill heaven's bounds with thine ecstatic flow?
And as yon spheres in ether's boundless sea,
E're whirl and gleam in endless harmony,
Do ransomed souls e'er float and thrill in thee?

TOO LATE.

His life's a failure—this he feels and knows—
So, effortless, he lets life seek its close.
To make amends, 'tis ne'er too late, think you?
Ah, yes there is! When we the past review
And there behold but errors, sins and years;
A past so madly spent the night it rears
Behind us o'er our future casts its shade;
When memory turns a curse and hope is dead,
And stand we in the shadow of Despair,
And inward weep her silent, ceaseless tear,—
Ah, tears that never from the eyelids start,
But burn to bitter ashes in the heart!—
Whilst thus we stand with thoughts as dark as death;
Thoughts searing as Sahara's burning breath;
And through our souls echo these words that well
Might mingle with the hopeless cries of hell:
"Too late! too late!"—ah, then it is too late!—
When we thus feel and speak, we speak our fate!

FOR AN AUTOGRAPH ALBUM.

Here in this vale of years,
'Twere vain to wish thy cheeks unwet of tears;
Here where no day may come
But withers from the heart some hope's fair bloom;

Here where hopes realized,
Are lightly held or cast from us despised;
Here where, if clasped, must part,
Or soon or late, each loved and loving heart;

Here where love's kiss doth prove
Not sweeter than is sharp the sting of love—
To wish, I say, 'twere vain,
That in this life no tears thy cheeks may stain!

Then, wish I thee the best
That here on earth hath any mortal blessed—
'Tis that philosophy
That plucks a jewel from adversity!

ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS.

When Summer dies,
Lo, how Nature glorifies
The occasion! Lo, how she,
As if death, indeed, should be
Life reborn, victorious,
Maketh earth a pageantry;

Decking field and wood and wold
Bright in colors manifold,
Gorgeous, glad and glorious;
When Summer dies !

Lo, is not some hint divine
Meant for man in this? A sign
Which, if he aright could read,
Of all shadow death were freed?
Saith it not to man: "Behold!—
Gaily dight in crimson, gold,
Glad as bride to meet her groom,
Summer goeth to the tomb!
Lo, with willing heart and hands
Greets she death, thy terror grim!
Lo, how one who understands
What is Death, doth welcome him!"

EMERSON.

Picture thou some noble river,
Placid, deep, translucent; ever
With a calm, majestic motion,
Tending toward the mighty ocean,—
On 'mong hills and valleys glide,
Meadowlands and forests wide;
With august curves, majestic motion,
Tending toward the mighty ocean,—
In its broad and placid bosom
Mirroring, o'erhanging blossom,

Soaring bird and butterfly,
Rocks and trees and cloud and sky,
Firefly or star or sun;
Least and greatest, slighting none—
How like such river, Emerson!

II.

Picture thou some day in June,
That's from morn till eve a boon;
From horizon rim to rim
Not a mist the sky to dim;
Airs so soft, so crystal clear,
Near seems far and far seems near.
From the earth to skies above,
Breathes a spirit sweet of love,
Whereof mountain, valley, sea,
Drinketh silent ecstasy;
And from earth up to the sun,
Reigns the perfect will of One—
How like such day is Emerson!

III.

Picture thou the star of morn
Sweetly crown the dewy dawn:
Not an earthly touch can mar it,
Not an earthly discord jar it;
Swung in depth of ether keen,
Beaming with a light serene,
Luminous, so palpable,
All exclaim, "How beautiful!"
And while it we look upon,
Fain we'd stay the rising sun—
How like such star is Emerson!

PAUL SHARON.

Seducer of woman, Paul Sharon
Unblushingly boasted the power
He wielded for woman's undoing.

One night in a part of the city,
Where had he the fullest acquaintance,
An house that for purposes evil
Was openly kept, did he enter;
And with him, in veil deeply hidden,
A girl—yea, a victim the latest
To owe to his powers seductive
Her fall, her despair and perdition,—
Her shame that shall even grow shameless!

It chanced, through an innocent blunder
On part of an household employe,
That Paul and his girlish companion,
Were ushered in rooms that already
Were taken by earlier comers.
On entering the room he discovered
There seated about a small table,
Wine drinking, a man and a woman.

When she, seated there at the table,
Glanced up and beheld who had entered,
She suddenly rose her full stature,
And there face to face with Paul Sharon,
As pallid and frozen as death is,
She stood with unspeakable horrow
And shame in her countenance written.

With looks that were no less astounding,
To those there who stood as onlookers,
Paul stood him a-stare at the woman,
As stature-like, speechless as she was!—
His countenance wore the expression
Of one who might stand in fierce struggle,
So striving to feel that some ghastly
And terrible fact were but seeming!

Thus stood they some moments in silence,—
An horrible silence! Then Sharon
Gained power of speech, and broke silence
With words that come slowly and labored,
As speech that is brokenly uttered
While strangled of pain is the speaker:
"My God—O, my God"—thus he uttered;
"What do you—here—Lettie—what means this?"
To this made she answer: "My brother,
Than you, there are other seducers!"
This uttered, she swooned, and had fallen
Full length in the room, had her brother
Not caught her in falling. He bore her
Near by to a sofa. As o'er her
He bowed him, the pangs that he suffered
He had in exchange gladly given
For those of the damned in Hell's torment!

Thus bowed he some while; then uprising
He walked to and fro 'cross the floor,
With cheeks that seemed bloodless as marble,
With eyes that were wild like a madman's,

Or like to the eyes of a victim
Rack tortured till pain has grown painless!

Anon, as with movements decisive
Of one who has asked and is answered,
He firmly strode up to his sister,
Who, out of her swoon just reviving,
Scarce knew if she waked or was dreaming.
He took from concealment a pistol
And placed at her temple the muzzle,
And ere any one there could stay him,
The ball through her brain had gone crashing!
Then instantly turning the pistol
Against his own temple, he fired,
Downfalling beside his dead sister,
His hand on her hand, and was silent!

MIGHT AND RIGHT.

I.

On every hand, as far as eye can see,
Lie fairest scenes of peaceful husbandry;
Yet on this scene this fairest morn in May;
Two armies meet for deadliest affray!

II.

Where gentle Nature seemeth so to love him;
Her flowers at his feet, blue skies above him;
Where every scene and sound of nature is
Of beauty, song or love or gentleness,

Ah, how can man but here all evil smother
And sweetly meet as brother meeting brother!

III.

But all in vain doth nature make appeal
Through gentleness and beauty; war is steel
In heart and hand alike, and so is deaf
To song of love and joy, or wail of grief.
Ah, soon yon grass now green beneath their tread,
Shall wear a hue incarnadine instead;
Soon on yon skies that blue above them bend,
Sulphuric murk of battle shall ascend;
Full soon amid the roll of musketry
And cannon roar, shall welter there a sea
Of carnage, where, the living, struggling tread
Beneath their feet the dying and the dead!

IV.

What power drives men consciously to death?
Or from above is it? or from beneath?
In neither host is there a single heart
But had its will today in peace would part,
And leave yon hills and fields their stainless green,
And yonder sky its unmarred blue serene!
And yet they march them onward, onward still
To bloody graves!—Aye, aye, for they fulfill
A destiny more deep than human will!

V.

For Progress is the law supreme, of life;
A law that worketh less through peace than strife

In primal days of man when strength of arm
Is most he hath to hold 'twixt him and harm.
So in our days of cruder sense and soul
'Tis Might that's right and wisely hath control;
Hence, war, since man came on the stage of time
Hath been a factor in his upward climb;
But ever less and less is so, as he
Ascends the scale of reason; finally
'Twill wholy cease; for tends he towards an height
Where reason reigns supreme and Right is Might;
An height where wholly true these words will be,
In practice perfect as in theory—
And being wholly true shall be so plain
That none will needs defend them nor explain—
"My brother's loss is mine, his gain my gain!"

SUMMER'S DEAD.

Yellow leaf and crimson blown
Through skies swallowless and lone;
Feathered seeds of weed and grass,
Ghostily before you pass
Over fields, through woodland ways.
Distant scenes are soft with haze
Sweet and sad as memory
Of glad days that used to be—
Summer's dead!

Currentless the river lies
Mirroring the pensive skies,
And the tattered boughs that lean
O'er its crystal depths serene.

Ever and anon is twilred
Downward leaf, that, crisped and curled,
On the sleeping water sleeps,
Sinking soon to silent deeps—
Summer's dead!

Birds with but one note for song
Hop dismantled boughs among;
Birds as gray as winter's field
And as songless, silent steal
'Mong the brambles, where they feed
On blown seeds of grass and weed—
Feed them soundlessly save for
Sounds of withered leaves they stir—
Summer's dead!

Naked boughs as keen as pain,
Now of wind nor sun nor rain
Longer joyed or distressed;
In their grasp an empty nest—
Empty, or else but the tomb
Of dead leaf or withered bloom
Dropped from boughs above, or caught
Of blind winds and thither brought—
Summer's dead!

In the silent light that floods
Songless fields and songless woods,
Stands some subtle, sadful shade
That the light makes not afraid—
'Tis the absence of the one
Whom we loved—a shade no sun

Hath the power to illume;
'Tis the shadow of the tomb—
Summer's dead!

THE WORD OF A WEED.

A weed am I; ah, but a useless weed,
So man hath named me; saying that no need
On earth do I supply.
He says no fruit nor flower do I bear
That's either useful unto man or fair—
That but a nuisance, I.

But who here bade me spring? part of the plan,
Am not I, that is God's? What more is man?
Nay, nay, I am man's brother!
Though spurn me as he may, and me disclaim,
Is he not Nature's child? I am the same;
We have a common mother!

The earth, the sunshine, gentle dew and shower,
That feedeth man and beast and fruit and flower,
Are equally my need;
Sweet skies that bend o'er these, bend, too, above me;
Kind Nature loving these, as well doth love me,
Her child, though but a weed.

Though beauty none have I, nor use I be,
So far as man hath seen, or I can see,
Yet who here bade me grow?

This much I know: Kind nature's child am I,
Aye, even as all creatures else I spy—
Enough is this to know!

I ask not man his love and praise to give.
I only ask him that he let me live
Unharmed my little while;
Let fairer things man's love and praise receive,
'Tis well with me, if he will only leave
To me my mother's smile!

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